

Playing Dead: Living Death in Early Modern Drama

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Abstract

This thesis looks at occurrences of "living death" – a liminal state that exists between life and death, and which may be approached from either side – in early modern English drama. Today, reference to the living dead brings to mind zombies and their ilk, creatures which entered the English language and imagination centuries after the time of the great early modern playwrights. Yet, I argue, many post-Reformation writers were imagining states between life and death in ways more complex than existing critical discussions of "ghosts" have tended to perceive.

My approach to the subject is broadly historicist, but informed throughout by ideas of stagecraft and performance. In addition to presenting fresh interpretations of well-known plays such as Thomas Middleton's *The Maiden's Tragedy* (1611) and John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), I also endeavour to shed new light on various non-canon works such as the anonymous *The Tragedy of Locrine* (c.1591), John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (c.1602), and Anthony Munday's mayoral pageants *Chrysothriambos* (1611) and *Chrysanaleia* (1616), works which have received little in the way of serious scholarly attention or, in the case of *Antonio's Revenge*, been much maligned by critics. These dramatic works depict a whole host of the living dead, including not only ghosts and spirits but also resurrected Lord Mayors, corpses which continue to "perform" after death, and characters who anticipate their deaths or define themselves through last dying speeches. By exploring the significance of these characters, I demonstrate that the concept of living death is vital to our understanding of deeper thematic and symbolic meanings in a wide range of dramatic works.

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Notes on the text

Wherever possible, the original spellings of all cited early modern texts have been retained. The only exceptions to this are the archaic “vv”, “i” “v” and “u” characters, which, in the interests of clarity, I have modernised to their modern equivalents: “w”, “j”, “u”, and “v” respectively.

In the rare instances where it has not been possible to retain the original spellings of certain sources, I have made this clear in my notations.

For all early modern publications, I have referenced quotations by page signature number.

Unless stated otherwise, all citations from the works of William Shakespeare refer to the 2007 Royal Shakespeare Company edition of *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen. All Biblical citations refer to the 2008 Oxford World’s Classics edition of *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*.

No part of this thesis has been previously submitted for examination. The conclusion does reproduce, however, a brief commentary on the 2011 RSC *Macbeth*, directed by Michael Boyd in Stratford-upon-Avon, which I presented as part of a larger, unpublished paper at the “Devils and Dolls: Dichotomous Children” conference at Bristol University in 2012.

My bibliography and footnotes are referenced in the New Oxford Style as per the 2012 edition of the *New Oxford Style Manual*.

Living death: An Introduction

This thesis explores the prominent role of “living death” – a liminal state that exists between life and death, and which may be approached from either side of the divide – in early modern drama between the end of the 16th and first part of the 17th centuries. Living death is a broad concept that encompasses a whole range of on-stage bodies which exist in states that are neither entirely dead nor unequivocally living, and includes such phenomena as ghosts, body parts, fresh-bleeding corpses, resurrected Lord Mayors, dying characters carefully choosing their last words (or having those words carefully chosen *for* them by the living) and living actors playing any of the above and more besides. Living death occurs between states of life and death, and presents what Mary Louise Pratt would call a “contact zone” in which travellers from both directions come and go and exchanges take place on a number of different levels.¹ My argument thus builds upon, but also presents a radical departure from, previous studies of ghosts, death, bodies and the performances of the dead on stage. Early modern playwrights were, I argue, keenly aware of the symbolic potential of characters who blur the lines between living and dead, and so it is that wherever we see in drama from this period living characters engaged in the process of confronting death, or dead characters who in some way stare back from the abyss, these characters tend to represent the themes at the very heart of texts in which they appear.

These themes are, as with the different permutations of living death itself, wonderfully diverse. While existing critical discussions of the dead and dying in early modern drama tend to read such characters in terms of the supernatural

¹ Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”, *Profession*, 91 (New York: MLA, 1991), 33-40, 33 and *passim*.

or religious contexts of the period, in fact, I argue, the significations of living death are far more varied and complex than has been hitherto perceived. As I demonstrate over the course of this thesis, the living dead are immensely versatile, and are used by writers as powerful signifiers to represent and explore – either implicitly or explicitly – a range of ideas, from the historical and socio-political to notions of theatrical convention. Ghosts can be used metatheatrically, to engage directly with the audience on a singularly macabre level, as they are in John Marston's tragedy *Antonio's Revenge* (1602). Resurrected politicians in Anthony Munday's *Chruso-thriambos* (1611) and *Chrysanaleia* (1616) uniquely embody the connection between civic power and memory. The dead and dying bodies in tragedies including *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Maiden's Tragedy* (1611) serve as powerful visual representations of commemorative anxieties and the conflict between the individual self and the external other. In short, when an early modern dramatist presents characters either dead or alive as somehow straddling the line between this world and the next, it is rarely a simple matter of life and death.

In order to explore the function of living death as a ubiquitous symbolic force in early modern drama, however, one must establish the terms within which such symbols would have been interpreted and understood. To this end, my methodological approach in this thesis is largely historicist, but I am informed throughout by ideas of stagecraft and performance. During my exploration of living death I engage with concepts such as last dying speeches, the afterlife, ghosts and London civic politics, all of which occupied a very different place in the English public consciousness at the time these texts were written than they do for today's theatregoers. In order to fully appreciate what writers were attempting to achieve through their representation of living dead

characters, we must therefore understand both the circumstances from which these characters arose, and the audiences for whom they were intended. As such, while I treat the dramatic works which I discuss as products of and reactions to their historical context, the focus of my argument always returns to how these works would have been understood as performances in front of a live audience.

I arrange this thesis into two halves in order to reflect the fact that the nebulous realm of living death may be approached from two different sides, as the dying lovers Jane and Shore identify in Thomas Heywood's *2 King Edward IV* (1599). Mortally wounded, Jane and Shore climb into a coffin containing the corpse of their recently-deceased friend and give voice to their peculiar liminal situation, providing as they do so one of the first examples in English drama of the phrase "living death":

Shore. O happy grave! To us this comfort giving!
 Here lies two living dead! Here one dead living!
 Here for his sake, lo, this we do for thee:
 Thou lookst for one, and art possessed of three.
Jane O, dying marriage! O, sweet married death!
 Thou grave, which only shouldst part faithful friends,
 Bringst us together, and dost join our hands/
 O, living death! Even in this dying life.²

In Heywood's terms, then, a state of living death might be experienced by either the "living dead" (that is, individuals alive but on the very brink of death), or the "dead living" (those who are dead but retain living characteristics). There is undoubtedly some overlap between the two sides; characters such as Polonius in *Hamlet* (c.1602) and Sophonirus in *The Maiden's Tragedy*, for example, who die but whose corpses, played by living actors, remain on stage afterwards,

² Thomas Heywood, *The First and Second Part of King Edward IV*, ed. Richard Rowland (Manchester: MUP, 2005), 205-311, 307.

might be said to occupy a place in both categories. Similarly dichotomous are characters such as Banquo in *Macbeth* (c.1606) or *The White Devil's* Bracciano, who die during the course of their respective plays only to return as ghosts. However, while many of the plays discussed over the course of this thesis explore at various points living death from both perspectives, the distinction which Heywood draws nevertheless presents a useful starting point for accessing and interpreting the thematic significance of specific dramatic works. The place of the dead in the world of the living – and their particular involvement, therefore, in living death – is intrinsically related to the means by which they entered death in the first place. To this end, the first half of this thesis, “The Living Dead”, explores what Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi* deems the “voyage” *into* the afterlife (c.1612, 5.5.123) – specifically the significance of characters who mimic or anticipate their own demise, with a central focus on the dying moments of characters in tragedies *The White Devil* and *The Maiden's Tragedy*. The second half, “The Dead Living”, builds on the arguments of the first half by considering the ways in which dramatists present living death as navigated by the returning dead rather than the living, focusing primarily on Munday's mayoral pageant *Chruso-thriambos*, and Marston's tragedy *Antonio's Revenge*.

This thesis thus contributes to our wider understanding of early modern drama not only in terms of its central conceptual focus, but also in terms of its analytical emphasis throughout on non-canon and lesser-known dramatic texts. Plays such as the much-maligned *Antonio's Revenge* and the anonymous *The Tragedy of Locrine* (c.1591) have, for various reasons, received little in the way of dedicated scholarly attention before now, but my exploration of the uses to which they put their living dead characters reveals that these works have much

to offer modern readers, particularly in terms of the ways in which both capitalise on the metatheatrical potential of ghostly characters in order to subvert audience expectations. Similarly, although Munday's pageants *Chruso-thriambos* and *Chrysanaleia* have been the focus of some critical study in the past, generally speaking such analysis has been limited to smaller parts of various broader explorations of London's historical civic pageantry. Not only have these two particular grandiose bespoke travelling entertainments rarely been the subjects of extended dramatic analysis, but neither text has ever received more than a passing mention in discussions of ghosts and relationships between the living and the dead in early modern England. That this should be the case is startling given that living death is not only ubiquitous throughout these pageants, but integral to the thematic and symbolic message of both, as I discuss. In addition, I shed fresh light on more canonical plays such as John Webster's *The White Devil* and Thomas Middleton's *The Maiden's Tragedy*. By considering these plays through the lens of living death I am able to build on the large body of contemporary criticism attached to both works and present innovative perspectives on the central characters in *The White Devil* (Vittoria, Flamineo and Bracciano) and *The Maiden's Tragedy* (The Lady, The Tyrant and Govianus) in terms of what I refer to as "death-oriented self-fashioning" – that is, the manner by which characters attempt to define their own identities in their final actions and last dying speeches.

The volume of texts investigated in this thesis attests to the fact that the living dead were a prevalent feature not only in early modern drama, but also in early modern society. As I explore in Chapter 1, socio-cultural influences in early modern England caused shifts in public perceptions of death and dying. The most prominent influence came with the Protestant Reformation, which not

only changed how the public viewed death, but also the entire relationship between the living and the dead, which during the Catholic years had been neatly coded. Whereas Catholic teaching allowed for an active and healthy relationship between the mortal world and the afterlife, Protestantism placed an impenetrable “barrier between the living and the dead”.³ It is no exaggeration to say that social and religious tensions were high during the begrudging shift from Catholic to Protestant beliefs, and the dead played a prominent role in the conflict of ideologies.⁴ Yet even while Protestantism sought to move away from the Catholic-taught active relationship between the living and the dead, the literal breaking of the “barrier” represented by a resurrected corpse on stage directly contradicts Protestant teachings. The theatrical ‘living dead’ can thus be seen to function as visual signifiers of existing tensions between the old order and the new.

A second, more tangible influence on the interaction between the living and the dead – in London especially – came with the severe lack of burial space within the city. Churchyards in early modern London were small and often encroached upon by surrounding buildings and communal areas.⁵ With the death rate high, especially in times of plague, graveyards would literally overflow, releasing an “inavoydable stench” of putrefaction into the air as the dead were forced back into the world of the living.⁶ Not only were the dead often close at hand in day-to-day existence, but interaction between the living and the dead had very much entered the cultural mindset. It is no surprise, then, that writers living and dying in this particular environment capitalised on the

³ Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 122.

⁴ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 398-400.

⁵ Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500-1670* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 47-8.

⁶ Thomas Dekker, *Newes from Graves-end sent to nobody* (London: Thomas Creede for Thomas Archer, 1604), sig. B2.

emblematic potential of living death. This dichotomous state was uniquely suited to represent the liminal aspects of a contemporary society which was itself engaged in uneasy processes of religious and social transition.

As public conceptions of death evolved, so too did the related issue of the self-fashioning in death – a process which was on prominent display on the scaffolds of early modern London, and which forms the focus of Chapter 2, “Fashioning Death: The Dead and Dying in *The White Devil* and *The Maiden’s Tragedy*”. The public spectacles of theatre and capital punishment are deeply connected on a number of levels. As an ever-expanding body of scholarly criticism attests, the interrelatedness of stage and scaffold might be found in the very geography and architecture of early modern London, the citizens of which had a shared appreciation for both forms of highly visible public performance. Michel Foucault famously outlined the innate theatricality of public execution in his influential *Discipline and Punish*, in which he described the rites of capital punishment as nothing less than a “theatre of punishment” where the state tries to inscribe its power on the body of the felon along with a public admission of guilt and repentance,⁷ generally in the form of a “last dying speech”. However, if the state’s discursive investment in such performative displays was evident, so too was the potential for condemned individuals to look beyond their own demise and use their final public performances in order to influence or exercise control over their posthumous fates, either in spiritual or commemorative terms. The public execution, then, presents in a heightened form a conflict for control over identity between the dying individual and powerful outside forces; between self-fashioning and the external re-fashioning of one’s discursive or spiritual identity.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 116

The relationship between self-fashioning, dying and identity as acted out on a regular basis on the scaffolds of London appears to have greatly influenced Webster's *The White Devil*, a play named after a popular contemporary term for deceit, deception or moral decay disguised as virtue, which bleeds undetected into the world and actively corrupts those around it. I explore what it means to self-fashion in Webster's world of unrelenting moral chaos, in which there exists no lasting "positive ethic" and discursive dominance is inscribed, in Foucault's terms, on the bodies of the dead.⁸ In this tragedy, power is attained through the ability to manipulate identity by both self-fashioning and re-fashioning others. Flamineo, the anti-hero of the play, embodies the relationship between deception and control, pursuing his desire to "grow great" at any costs by frequently altering his "shapes" to suit his audience (4.2.248, 247), assuming roles such as knave and madman, cold-blooded murderer, and pander to his sister Vittoria. However, while characters such as Flamineo, Vittoria and her lover Bracciano are on the one hand beneficiaries of this atmosphere of relentless shape-shifting, on the other hand they are also its victims, and come to realise their "true" selves only on the verge of death. In these moments we are, as Dena Goldberg explains, made to sympathise with those individuals whose passions and aspirations force them to defy this oppressive, obfuscating environment, but also "made to see that their defiance can only end in their own destruction".⁹ These characters may be presented as being at their most lucid and self-aware when confronting death, but in their final moments – particularly in the cases of Vittoria and Flamineo – Webster

⁸ Travis Bogard, *The Tragic Satire of John Webster* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 118, 131.

⁹ Dena Goldberg, *Between Worlds: A Study of the Plays of John Webster* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1987), 9.

reveals this clarity to be unsustainable amid the “black storm” of relentless objectification by external forces.

The same pessimistic envisioning of death-oriented identity fashioning is evident in Middleton’s treatment of the Lady in *The Maiden’s Tragedy*, whose unfortunate afterlife contains a darker message despite the fact that she never behaves as anything less than a beacon of virtuous self-fashioning. The subversive undercurrent of the tragedy becomes clear when the Lady’s spiritual goodness is contrasted with the material “greatness” of the court (1.1.128). Try as the Lady might to transcend the deviant materiality and erotic obsession of her enemy the Tyrant, even going so far as to take her own life in order to break free from the physical constraints which threaten her, her attempt to define her selfhood, like the self-fashioning of Flamineo and Vittoria, is resisted at every turn by powerful outside forces. The problematic significations of her plight find their ultimate expression in the final scene of the play, 5.2, in which her Ghost appears alongside her corpse – an unusual occurrence in early modern drama – and Govianus responds to the Tyrant’s re-fashioning of the Lady’s body by further re-fashioning it with poisonous make-up and a living-dead coronation. Furthermore, in both this and Webster’s tragedy the climactic struggle between the individual will and external power is anticipated by the fates of other characters. I contribute in this chapter new arguments regarding Middleton’s pandering courtier Sophonirus, and Webster’s hapless martyr-figure Isabella – characters who have been thus far overlooked in most critical analyses of these dramatic works and whose death scenes, I argue, establish the terms by which later deaths and dying moments in their respective plays may be understood. While, then, at first glance these tragedies seem to present a powerful response to the process of posthumous re-fashioning, the fates of their central characters

ultimately serves to dramatise its mechanics, and in doing so effectively negate notions of death-oriented self-fashioning.

As outlined above, however, states of living death might be achieved not only by dying, but also by returning from the dead – a notion which deeply fascinated early modern writers. The second half of this thesis, “The Dead Living”, thus considers living death in terms of dramatic works which depict dead characters who return to the world of the living in forms such as dreams, cadavers, revenants and ghosts. Chapter 3, “A Brief History of Haunting”, serves as an introduction to the sorts of ghost stories which would have influenced dramatic works such Marston’s revenge tragedy *Antonio’s Revenge* and Munday’s *Chruso-thriambos*, both of which feature ghosts as central participants in their respective narratives. The Protestant Reformation saw a shift away from medieval spiritualism and cut off officially-sanctioned lines of communication between the living and the dead, with apparitions of the dead being reclassified both by the Church of England and influential reformist writers such as Ludwig Lavater and King James I as angelic or demonic manifestations rather than the revenant souls of the departed. Elsewhere, sceptics such as Thomas Nash and Reginald Scot applied pragmatic logic in order to denounce belief in ghosts as “fond and superstitious”.¹⁰ However, no amount of religious sanction or sensible reasoning could diminish altogether the prominent place of the ghosts and spirits in public memory, imagination and folklore. There was, then, a clear tension between Protestant scepticism and a residual Catholic desire for, as the Duchess of Malfi would put it, “conference with the dead” (4.2.21).

¹⁰ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: Printed for Andrew Clark, 1665 [first published 1584]), 491.

This tension, I argue, finds expression in the treatment of theatrical ghosts, which are commonly depicted on stage in ways which foreground their ambiguity. Drawing from both Catholic and Protestant sensibilities, they appear frequently as the spirits of the dead, but the reality of their presence within the confines of the dramatic narrative is often left questionable or uncertain. While this is in keeping with the traditional roles of ghosts in classical tragedy – where their purpose was to remain separate from the action taking place in the central drama and act as choruses or prologues – there is, as critics such as Stephen Greenblatt, Theo Brown and Scott Dudley have observed, a subtext here evocative of the uneasy socio-religious role of ghosts in contemporary society. Ghosts on the early modern stage are frequently sources of communicative frustration. Sometimes the frustration is theirs, as is the case for Don Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1587) and Albanact in *The Tragedy of Locrine* both of whom are forced to watch from the sidelines and unable to participate in the dramatic action. More often it is the living who are frustrated, such as Francisco in *The White Devil*, who chastises himself for experiencing a vision of the dead Isabella, or Shakespeare's Hamlet, who is left in doubt even after conversing with the ghost of his father. Generally speaking, where plays allow for "conference" or other forms of interaction to take place between the living and the dead, such engagement inevitably draws on a myriad of cultural and religious significations which tend to raise more questions than answers.

Ghosts, however, can stand for more than social or theological division. Their place in the cultural zeitgeist and their embodiment of the living death between two worlds, meant that the ghost could become a symbol for other forms of uncertainty, marginalisation or liminality. In Chapter 4 I explore two dramatic works which present audiences with living dead characters who

actively engage with the main action of the drama in ways which capitalise in unexpected ways on the aforementioned symbolic potential of ghosts and spirits, and do so to great effect. In *Antonio's Revenge*, the voices of the dead Andrugio and Feliche combine with the voice of the living Pandulpho, who all cry "Murder" in stereo, from both "*above and beneath*" the stage (3.2.74-6, SD 75). The effect of presenting the audience with a mixture of living and living dead characters in one space not only blurs the boundaries between the living and the dead but allows Marston to deconstruct what Rick Bowers terms the "notions of sanity and society and the conventional cause-and-effect relationships that purport to hold a society together".¹¹ The play's various eccentricities and absurdities have caused some critics to consign it to "the dustbin of bad drama".¹² I, on the other hand, argue that *Antonio's Revenge* is best read as metatheatre. Marston dramatises interactions between the living and the dead in such a way as to shockingly engage with and subvert his audience's theatrical preconceptions. Moreover, *Antonio's Revenge* is highly self-aware, and Marston cleverly uses the structure of the stage to present his audience with zones of communication in which both living and living dead characters appear simultaneously, reiterating the fact that this ostensible tragedy exists outside of standard moral, narrative and theatrical conventions. Like *Locrine's Albanact*, for example, Andrugio defies prince Hamlet's famous description of death as an "undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveller returns" (*Hamlet*, 3.1.85-6) by remaining a central and active participant in Marston's dramatic narrative long after his death, and behaving

¹¹ Rick Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe': the 'Antonio' plays", in *The Drama of John Marston*, ed. T.F. Wharton (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 14-26, 15.

¹² Barbara J. Baines, "*Antonio's Revenge*: Marston's Play on Revenge Plays", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23/2 (Spring 1983), 277-294, 278.

with a sense of theatrical self-awareness which entertains the audience even while emotionally unsettling them.

Ghosts were also a popular feature of the Lord Mayor's Shows, the large-scale theatrical pageants that paraded through the streets of London to celebrate the inauguration of the new Lord Mayor to office. In Anthony Munday's 1611 pageant *Chruso-thriambos*, the bodies of the first Lord Mayor of London, Henry Fitz-Alwine (named Leofstane throughout) and a medieval Lord Mayor, Sir Nicholas Faringdon are resurrected in order to take part in the festivities. While these living dead Lord Mayors fulfil a clear role in symbolising the changing of the guard, so to speak, they are nevertheless problematic, I argue, not least of all because they do not adhere to the conventions of the early modern ghost in any recognisable manner. Indeed, the living dead Mayors are not explained in terms of afterlife and Purgatory, but rather in terms of a Church-sanctioned belief in resurrection from death. As I discuss, however, unlike the lasting Biblical resurrections of figures such as Lazarus or Jesus Christ, the reanimated Lord Mayors in Munday's Show are only temporarily resurrected for a purely commercial purpose – to take part in the pageant, in what Daryl Palmer calls an innovative merger between commerce and Christianity".¹³ Also problematic in *Chruso-thriambos* is the highly visual manner in which the character of Time resurrects these bodies, which bears striking visual parallels with necromancy and witchcraft. In the case of Faringdon, Time cries "Arise, arise, I say, good *Faringdon*", then he "strieth on the Tombe with his Silver wand" (sig. B3v). More problematic than the visual signifier of the wand, however, is the question of how we are to interpret the morality and motivations of the living dead Mayors who are resurrected. As William Perkins

¹³ Daryl W. Palmer, "Metropolitan Resurrection in Anthony Munday's Lord Mayor's Shows", *Studies in English Literature*, 46/2 (Spring 2006), 371-87, 374.

writes in 1608, necromancers conjure “counterfeit apparitions of the dead”,¹⁴ but the living dead mayors in *Chruso-thriambos* are depicted as being very much the genuine articles (old Faringdon reacts to his time-displacement with a sense of joy and wonder). While the signification is of witchcraft, then, the products of Time’s spell remain virtuous, their resurrections knowingly brief. The complex moral connotations of the living dead Mayors, I argue, are central to Munday’s primary purpose in *Chruso-thriambos*: to critique contemporary discourses surrounding the related subjects of gold, mining, and the perils of greed, while using virtuous figures from London’s past to make a powerful visual comment on contemporary anxieties relating to the potential abuses of civic authority. Munday’s pageants for the Fishmongers, *Chrysanaleia*, offers some fascinating points of comparison: although these two Shows are strikingly different, tailored as they are to suit the guilds and specific Lord Mayors by whom these pageants were commissioned, both nevertheless present the living dead in ways which capture and reflect specific moments in the English public consciousness. They use ghosts, risen corpses and necromancy to situate these moments within a wider moral and historical framework, invoking the past in order to comment on the present and future.

Living death can be terrifying. Living death can be satirical. It can be disconcerting, it can be hilarious, and it can be unsettling. But living death is always exciting. It is a dynamic, energising dramatic force which imbues everything around it with new significance. I conclude this thesis by drawing attention to the potential for further performance-based studies of living death,

¹⁴ William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Printed by Cantrel Legge, 1608), sig. H3v.

the need for which has been previously highlighted by Stanley Wells.¹⁵

Exploring texts in relation to the concept of living death opens up entirely new ways of reading early modern drama, the characters in them and the actors performing them, and thus has significant ramifications for literary critics and theatre practitioners alike.

¹⁵ Stanley Wells, "Staging Shakespeare's Ghosts", in *The Arts of Performance in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama: Essays for G.K. Hunter*, ed. Eugene M. Waith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 50-70.

Chapter 1

Living Death in Early Modern England

GIOVANNI: What do the dead do, uncle? Do they eat,
Hear music, go a-hunting, and be merry,
As we that live?
FRANCISCO: No, coz, they sleep.
GIOVANNI: Lord, Lord! That I were dead!
I have not slept these six nights. When do they
wake?
FRANCISCO: When God shall please.
GIOVANNI: Good God, let her sleep
ever!¹

The woman to whom the youth Giovanni refers in the above passage from Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) is his own mother, Isabella, who was, earlier in the play, cruelly murdered at the request of her husband and Giovanni's father, the Duke of Bracciano. Although the circumstances of Isabella's death are of some interest later in this thesis (see Chapter 2, "Fashioning Death: The Dead and Dying in *The White Devil* and *The Maiden's Tragedy*"), it is the exchange between Giovanni and his uncle, and Giovanni's tender plea to the Almighty that his mother, who has suffered a fate that he does not fully understand, might enjoy a "sleep" that he cannot comprehend, which serve here as a useful way of introducing the ideas of living death which this chapter explores. Specifically, Giovanni and Francisco present the audience with two different possibilities regarding the continued existence of the dead in the living world. To Francisco, Isabella is beyond all assistance; her "blessèd memory" (3.2.346) and the living body of his nephew are, he tells us, "all of my poor sister that remains" (3.2.343). Conversely, Giovanni entertains the idea that the dead may continue to enjoy the same experiences as they did in life, and in this vein

¹ John Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. Christina Luckyj (London: Norton, 2002), 3.2.327-332.

he feels that his mother has been dealt a great injustice by being “wrapped ... in a cruel fold of lead” (3.2.331) which denies him access to her. To Giovanni, it seems, death should prove no hindrance to social interaction. Although the views of uncle and nephew differ, they might be reconciled as constituent parts of a greater experience of death in post-Reformation England. Francisco’s views represent contemporary theological orthodoxy in line with the Protestant teaching which positioned the souls of the dead incontrovertibly beyond the reach of the living. The vision of posthumous existence offered by Giovanni, on the other hand, speaks to the memory of Roman Catholic forms of communication with the deceased (via intercessionary prayer or through interaction with revenant corpses and ghosts) that still held a place in the collective public consciousness. Furthermore, despite Giovanni’s apparent naivety his understanding of death speaks to the everyday reality of life and death in a society where corpses frequently entered back into the world of the living in a number of ways independent of religious and spiritual doctrine. In short, the conversation between Giovanni and Francisco simultaneously acknowledges the separation between the living and the dead in early modern England even as it hints at the permeability of that same divide.

It is how that permeability manifested in day-to-day early modern England which concerns me in this chapter. Like Giovanni, I wish to uncover the means by which the dead transcended the figurative and literal divide between life and death. What spiritual and physical exchanges – knowledge, power, flesh and blood – took place between the living and the dead in early modern England? Where were the primary “contact zones”,² to use Mary Louise Pratt’s term, at which these interactions took place? How was the relationship between

² Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”, *Profession*, 91 (New York: MLA, 1991), 33-40, 33 and *passim*.

the living and the dead reflected in drama from the period? Exactly *what*, as Giovanni asks, do the dead *do*?

Any answers to the above questions are, inevitably, complex, and it is perhaps easier to begin by discounting the answer Francisco offers to his nephew's query: "they sleep". Although he seeks to comfort his nephew and quell his own rising grief, Francisco – a military man who has seen "the murders, rapes and thefts" committed in war (4.1.8), and who vows to "play at football" with Bracciano's head (4.1.135) – knows well that the dead rarely enjoy peaceful slumber. Giovanni's innocent hope that his mother might "sleep ever" is thus tainted by a dark irony which Webster's early modern audience might well have interpreted in light of their own experience living in a society in which an undisturbed posthumous existence was a sought-after but seldom granted luxury. The funeral song for Innogen in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (c.1611) celebrates the merits of a "quiet consummation" (4.2.345), while the monument over Shakespeare's own burial-plot famously requests eternal peace and quiet – or else! "BLESTE BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES, / AND CURST BE HE YT MOVES MY BONES".³ Although the bones in question remain untouched to this day (which if nothing else is a testament to the power of a curmudgeonly epitaph), in both of these cases the act of expressing hope that Innogen and Shakespeare might be allowed to rest in peace tacitly acknowledges the risk that such rest might not be possible. In *Cymbeline*, that implicit risk is explicitly dramatised when Innogen abruptly wakes up moments after the song ends (4.2.356). These examples allude to the fact that for Shakespeare's contemporary Londoners, it was extremely difficult to secure a grave of one's own for very long. Instead, the grave was frequently a site of

³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York: Norton, 2004), 147.

social engagement between the living and the dead despite post-Reformation theological distinctions which should have made such interactions impossible. The living remained constant invaders of dead space, while the dead, for their part, erupted with alarming frequency back into the world of the living. Graveyards and other places of burial thus presented a unique cultural contradiction in which dead bodies could remain as much a part of the living community as they had been in life, a macabre paradox at the centre of which reside the living dead.

In pre-Reformation England, eventual removal from one's grave was seen as a necessary step in the process towards posthumous religious salvation. The bones of the dead, evicted from their graves to make room for new tenants, were sent to the charnel house for storage until the day of judgement. Charnel houses, however, were more than bleak warehouses; they performed a vital role in societal rituals of grief and mourning related to the tradition of Purgatory, the *Middle State of Souls*, in the words of Thomas White, between heaven and hell. In Catholic theology, Purgatory was believed to be the spiritual destination for souls who were not evil enough to descend to Hell, but were too much tainted by mortal sin to enter Heaven directly. Purgatory was a temporary punishment *en route* to the soul's final destination, although the length of time which a soul spent there before ascending to eternal rest was dependent upon the weight of its sins, which needed to be cleansed by holy fire before the soul could be deemed pure enough to enter Heaven.⁴

Communication between the living and the dead was a key component of the concept of Purgatory: through the bones of the dead, the friends and family of the deceased could communicate intercessory prayers to the

⁴ Thomas White, *The Middle State of Souls From the hour of Death to the Day of Judgment* (S. Aug, 1659).

afterlife in order to speed the passage of loved ones through the cleansing fires. Intercessionary prayers were big business for churches: as frequently happened, the clergy could be paid to offer intercessionary prayer on behalf of deceased Catholics in the form of masses. Post-mortem succour was often requested in wills, placing the living priests in a relationship with the dead at once contractual and spiritual. Henry VII, for example, famously put by funds to ensure that “no less than ten thousand masses should be said for his soul immediately after his death”.⁵ Such was the demand for intercession that charnel houses contained chapels in which priests were retained to “sing masses *in perpetuo* for the souls of the mighty”.⁶ Thus what would have struck a visitor to any church in Catholic Europe from the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, as Phillipe Ariès remarks, would have been “not so much the plowing of the ground by the gravediggers as the uninterrupted series of masses [for the dead] said in the morning at all alters by priests for whom this was often the only source of income”.⁷ In this manner, the piles of bones stripped of flesh and identity, reduced to the utmost anonymity, were still engaged with on a very personal level, their physical reduction counterbalanced by remembrance of their spiritual distinctiveness.

After the Reformation, however, the graveyard was stripped of its supernatural properties and became a site exclusively of and for the dead. No further interaction with the deceased by the living (officially, at least) was possible because, argued John Calvin, what would be the point? “There is nothing more that we can add or take away”.⁸ Protestant officials denounced all

⁵ Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England 1570-1625* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), 41.

⁶ Michael Neill, *Issues of Death* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 41.

⁷ Phillipe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (London: Allen Lane, 1981), 173.

⁸ Quoted in Natalie Zemon Davis, “Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France”, *Daedalus*, special issue on The Family (1977), 87-114, 94-5.

forms of exchange and communication between the living and the souls of the dead. The most immediate effect that this had on English cemeteries was the widespread emptying of the charnel houses as part of what John Weever famously termed a “barbarous rage against the dead”.⁹ Under Protestant doctrine, human remains had nothing to do with affairs of the soul, which passed “inexorably to heaven or hell” upon death.¹⁰ As a result, prayers for the dead were no longer deemed necessary. “The liturgy of remembrance fell abruptly silent”, writes Neill, “it was no longer possible for the living to assist the dead by such pious interventions, [and] death became a more absolute annihilation than ever”,¹¹ a sentiment underlined by changes to traditional funeral services. Masses for the dead went the way of the charnel houses, and guidelines such as that found in the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* instructed the minister to turn away from the corpse at the moment of committal. “The bones”, observes Schwyzer, “had gone dead”.¹²

The doctrinal shift thus removed the spirits of the dead from theological consideration. While charnel houses were decried as tools of an outdated and artificial brand of worship, however, their role in the efficient recycling of burial plots does not appear to have been immediately recognised. Without the ossuaries to store the steady supply of bones which were the products of interment, the remains of the Renaissance dead had nowhere to go. The Reformation thus had the undesirable effect of overcrowding the cemeteries in which the vast majority of early modern Londoners were buried. As such, while

⁹ John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments with in the united Monarchie of Great Britaine, Ireland, and the Ilands adjacent, with the dissolved Monastries therein contained; their Founders, and what eminent persons have been in the same interred* (London: Printed by Thomas Harper, 1631), 50-1.

¹⁰ Neill, *Issues*, 42.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹² Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 110.

Protestantism pushed the spirits of the dead away with the one hand, on the other hand it brought their corpses into much closer proximity to the living.

Failure to pick the bones, so to speak, would not have presented such a problem were there alternative locations to the graveyard for burial. In the city, however, one's options were limited. Interment itself, broadly speaking, occurred in one of three primary locations within close proximity: the deceased's parish churchyard, inside the church building itself, or in some intermediate location such as porch or cloister. Within these locations there were further distinctions. Early modern corpses could be placed "in the public area of the church, or in a chapel or vault assigned to a particular group; in a tomb or marked grave, or in the open and undifferentiated spaces of church and churchyard".¹³ There was a broad correlation between burial location and social importance, and burials inside the church were highly desired. "Élites secured burial in the topographical and spiritual heart of the community", writes Harding, "in the best and holiest parts of the church; those on the margins of society were buried in places peripheral to the parish".¹⁴ For most, of course, cost and availability determined what they could have, and so there was no real choice to be made. The majority of Renaissance dead, then, were buried in open churchyards.

The typical churchyard in early modern London was a far cry from the traditional image of a church free-standing in the middle of an open, green space. In reality, most city churches were hemmed in by buildings, with a small graveyard on perhaps one or two sides. In the period between the Black Death and the Reformation, several parishes were able to extend their burial space by

¹³ Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500-1670* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 46.

¹⁴ Ibid., 46-7; 48.

enlarging their churchyards or acquiring new ones while land values were low and space relatively cheap. But in no case were churchyards spacious or ample: few can have been more than a few square metres in extent.¹⁵

Churchyard burial was usually based on single graves, which Harding suggests may have been relatively shallow by modern standards: “in c. 1542 the parish of St Stephen Coleman ordered its sexton to bury adults 4 ft deep and children 3 ft, to avoid ‘corrupt heyers’”.¹⁶ The choice of words here suggests that bodies were sometimes buried at even shallower depths. Even after 1582, when plague orders required that all graves be dug at least six feet deep,¹⁷ the dead still impeached upon living space. So restricted was the available space for burial, that fresh corpses often had to be buried on top of old ones. Harding notes several examples from just after the Civil War, including that of Elizabeth Pistor, who was buried in St Helen's churchyard on 26 December 1651, and Anne Smith, a pensioner, placed “in the grave upon Elizabeth Pistor” on 25 February 1652.¹⁸ Pistor's peace and quiet lasted a little under two months. Such grisly churchyard economisation meant that while graves may have started out at six feet deep, bodies could end up mere inches beneath the surface.

Problems caused by limited burial space in the city were compounded by the famously high death rates in cities of pre-modern Europe, as well as limited methods of body preservation. Poor economic and sanitary conditions meant that “relative to our own society”, write Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, “throughout their lives people typically experienced the deaths of far greater

¹⁵ Ibid., 47-8.

¹⁶ Guildhall Library, MS 4456, 148, Corporation of London Records Office [CLRO], Journal 21, ff. 284v-286v, cited in Harding, *The Dead*, 64.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Harding, *The Dead*, 65.

numbers of children, kin or acquaintance”.¹⁹ In early modern England, rates of death “were often three times those of modern developed countries, while average life expectancy was about half”.²⁰ The sheer number of corpses which Renaissance London churned out meant that churchyards filled up rapidly. The churchyard of St Botolph Bishopsgate was “buried so full” by 1622 “that convenient ground can hardly be found for the burial of a child”.²¹ In times of famine or plague, which were frequent, the death count rose even higher, with the plague of 1625, for example, costing the lives of some 35,000 Londoners.²² With no real way of arresting decomposition, it was not possible to store the dead elsewhere until their burial for any extended period of time.

As such, early modern burials were generally prompt. Although the antiquary Tate wrote in 1600, “Amongst us there is not any sett and determinate time how longe the corps should be kept, but as seemeth best to the friends of the deceased”,²³ in most cases, as Vanessa Harding attests, the time between death and burial may not have been much more than a day.²⁴ Indeed, a rapid burial was encouraged in cases where a post-mortem examination was required, so that the town need not “suffer Body [sic] to lie long to Putrefaction” before the arrival of the coroner, who would purposefully “digg up the Body” again for inspection.²⁵

¹⁹ Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, “Introduction: placing the dead in late medieval and early modern Europe”, in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 1-17, 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, n.3.

²¹ Guildhall Library MS 4526/1, f. 15; Guildhall Library MSS 4515/1-3, cited in Harding, *The Dead*, 63.

²² See Harding, “Burial of the Plague Dead in Early Modern London”, in J.A.I. Champion, ed., *Epidemic Disease in London*, Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, 1 (1993), 53-64.

²³ Francis Tate, “Of the Antiquity, Variety, and Ceremonies of Funerals in England”, in Thomas Hearne, ed., *A Collection of Curious Discourses written by eminent Antiquaries upon several heads in our English Antiquities*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for Benjamin White, 1773-1775), 1: 217.

²⁴ Harding, *The Dead*, 187.

²⁵ Sir Matthew Hale, *Pleas of the crown* (London: Richard Tonson, 1678), 141.

Given the rapid turnover of graveyard soil that was symptomatic of everyday death in early modern England, it is unsurprising that the dead often spilled back over into the world of the living, in a variety of unpleasant ways. One does not envy those who lived through the “hot and drie Sommers” described by Thomas Dekker in 1604, when poorly-buried bodies protruded above the ground, “guts thrust out to be eaten up with paltry worms”, their “strong breath” poisoning the air with an “inavoydable stench” of putrefecation.²⁶ The predicament identified by Dekker – that of the overflowing, stinking grave – was not restricted to the turn of the century. In Stepney after the plague epidemic of 1625, parish officials ordered that its churchyard be earthed over with sand and gravel “for prevention of such noyome sentes as may arise from the graves and bodies there buried”. Stepney’s vestry agreed that they urgently needed to acquire a new place of burial, since the old one “will afford no more convenient place of Buriall without danger of infection by reason of the noysomeness of the ground there so opened by reason of so many bodies formerly enterred there”.²⁷

At least during times of 'normal' death cadaverous intrusion into living society was generally restricted to zones in and around the churchyard. During plague epidemics, however, when death tolls were at their highest, the presence of corpses was much more widespread. John Davies paints a grim picture of London caught in the grip of plague in his 1609 *Humours heav'n on earth*.²⁸

²⁶ Thomas Dekker, *Newes from Graves-end sent to nobody* (London: Thomas Creede for Thomas Archer, 1604), sig. B2.

²⁷ G. W. Hill and W. H. Frere, eds., *Memories of Stepney parish; That is to say the vestry minutes from 1579 to 1662, Now First Printed, with an Introduction and Notes* (Guildford: Billing and Sons, 1890-1), 109, 111.

²⁸ John Davies, *Humours heav'n on earth; with The Civile Warres of Death and Fortune* (London: by Adam Islip, 1609).

Cast out your Dead, the Carcasse-carrier cries,
Which he, by heaps, in groudlesse graves interres!
[...]
The Graves do often vomit out their dead,
They are so over-gorg'd, with great, and small;
Who hardly, with the earth are covered;
So, oft discover'd when the Earth did fall.
(sigs. J2r, L2r)

Such scenes may well have influenced other writers including Shakespeare: confronted with Banquo's bleeding ghost, for instance, Macbeth's imagines that "charnel houses and our graves must send / those that we bury back" (3.4.81-2). When Davies describes how the "skin" of the very earth "doth crack" from having consumed so much "meat" (sig. L2r), his words seem to echo prince Hamlet's upon meeting his father's Ghost:

thy canonized bones, hearsèd in death
Have burst their cerements, ... the sepulchre
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws
To cast thee up again.
(1.4.28-32)

Under plague conditions, traditional burial services became unworkable, and cities were forced to relinquish their elaborate rites of funeral in favour of "the degrading practice of mass burial in common pits".²⁹ When George Strode imagines death in his *Anatomy of Mortalitie* (1632) as the ending of a chess game in which the men are "tumbled together, and put into the bag",³⁰ his words refer to the power of death to make equal both king and pawn, but are also reminiscent of the lack of dignity associated with mass burials. In the wake of the 1625 plague, Dekker was again appalled to witness bodies tumbled "into

²⁹ Neill, *Issues*, 19.

³⁰ George Strode, *The Anatomy of Mortalitie*, 2nd edn. (London, 1632), sig. E3r. Cited in William E. Engel, *Mapping Mortality: The persistence of Memory and Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1995), 189.

their everlasting lodgings (ten in one heap, and twenty in another) ... The gallant and the beggar ... together; the scholar and the carter in one bed”,³¹ Worse, the “mattock and shovel have ventured so far”, in some cases, that “the very common-shore [sewer] breaks into these ghastly and gloomy warehouses”.³² Primarily through overpopulated graveyards, then, corpses, frequently found themselves back on the wrong side of what Schwyzer calls the “barrier between the living and the dead”,³³ and engaging with the living community once again.

All of which is not to suggest that the only interaction between the dead and the living was in the form of grotesque bodily re-emergences or half-burials as in the plague pits. There were other ways in which the living and the dead came into contact which resulted in the dead being re-inserted into the living community in some shape or form. On a daily basis cemeteries teemed with the “domestic, commercial, communal, and ceremonial, as well as religious” activities of the living, Harding notes.³⁴ The alley gate to the churchyard of St Christopher le Stocks was locked every night with a spring lock after 1508, for security, but the “dwellers in the churchyard” were given keys to it.³⁵ The privately owned cellar under the church of All Hallows Honey Lane, accessed from the churchyard by a trapdoor on the south side of the church, was used by its owners or tenants for storage of coal and salt; occupants of houses surrounding the churchyards of St Mary le Bow had rights of way over the churchyard, with front doors and cellar doors opening onto it.³⁶ The occupants

³¹ Dekker, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (London: Edward Allde for Nathaniel Butter, 1606), sig. Gv.

³² Dekker, *A Rod for Run-awayes* (London: G. Purslowe for John Trundle, 1625), sig. C3v.

³³ Schwyzer, *Archaeologies*, 122.

³⁴ Harding, *The Dead*, 46.

³⁵ E. Freshfield, ed., *Minutes of the vestry meetings and other records of the parish of St Christopher le Stocks in the city of London* (London: Rixon and Arnold, 1886), 70.

³⁶ Vanessa Harding and D. Keene, *Historical gazetteer of London before the Great Fire*, 1, *Cheapside*, Chadwyck-Healey microfiche, 1987, nos. 11/0, 11/8, 104/0, 104/9-14.

of properties adjoining or overlooking the church, Harding notes, were known to make illegal windows and doors into churchyards, and their own paving, building, and sheds encroached on the space needed for burials. Domestic activities such as laundry and poultry-keeping spilled out into the consecrated ground. Depending on the surrounding properties, churchyards were also known to become the sites of more noxious practices included industrial process such as cloth-stretching, metal-casting, and brickmaking. To add insult to injury, churchyards were frequently used for dumping unwanted refuse of various kinds.³⁷

Those wealthy enough to be buried inside a church were spared graveside thoroughfares and defilement with industrial waste, but were nonetheless very much in the thick of parish politics. Certain areas of the church were considered hotter property than others, as Marshall informs us: “burial within the chancel rails was usually seen as the most prestigious, followed by aisles and chapels, then the body of the church”.³⁸ It was also relatively common, Harding notes, for people to request for their burial by “the side of the pew where I used to sit”.³⁹ Such requests made bold statements about one's social standing. Seating in the parish church was not a fixed arrangement, but reviewed at intervals “to reflect the changing fortunes and life-cycles of the parishioners. Pew assignment gave a visible, spatial form to a hierarchy of status, [...] a collective or consensus view of the social pyramid”.⁴⁰ A request to be buried near or under one's regular pew, then, was less the result of “whimsical preference”, and more a clear-cut assertion of one's rightful place in

³⁷ Harding, *The Dead*, 53.

³⁸ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 288.

³⁹ Guildhall Library, MS 9051/4, f. 197v., cited in Harding, *The Dead*, 145.

⁴⁰ Harding, *The Dead*, 130.

the community – a place that would last long after death had removed one from one's seat.

On occasion, corpses lay at the very heart of social bickering. Howard Colvin relates the story of two families, the Needhams and the Corbets, who had a similar pew-cum-burial place in Adderley, in Shropshire in the reign of Charles I. "In the past, the two families had both been buried in the chancel, the Needhams on the north, the Corbets on the south", but in 1633 this condominium was broken by a calculated insult on the part of Sir John Corbet:

[Corbet] had the body of an Irish footboy buried on the Needham side. When Lord Kilmorey proceeded (with due ecclesiastical authority) to build himself a separate chapel on the north side of the nave, the Corbets persuaded the churchwardens to remove the screen that separated it from the church and forcibly occupied the seats themselves.⁴¹

The rivalry between the Needhams and the Corbets was still in progress when the Civil War supervened, and only after the Restoration were the Needhams once more able to occupy their pew undisturbed. Such morbid disputes highlight how important the precise location of burials within the church could be. Holy in every sense of the word, church interment was as much a matter of being set apart from the congregation as it was a matter of residing closer to the mass.

The popularity of, and stiff competition for, burial spots inside the church building meant that even high society cadavers, like their graveyard fellows, were forced to share their grave with fresh interments. John Donne writes:

Ambitious men never made more shift for places in court, than dead men for graves in churches; and as in our later times we have seen two and two almost in every place and office, so

⁴¹ Howard Colvin, *Architecture and the After-Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 258.

almost every grave is oppressed with twins. [...] [I]n this lamentable charity, the dead were buried, and thrown up again before they were resolved to dust, to make room for more.⁴²

Donne's observations emphasise not only how overcrowded burial plots were, but also the speed at which graves were turned over to accommodate fresh corpses. It was nigh impossible, even in the upmarket, dignified space of the church, to inter fresh bodies without disturbing old ones. These problems continued long into the seventeenth century, as Samuel Pepys reveals in his account of his conversation with the sexton, when he went to discuss his brother's burial in the church of St Bride Fleet Street: "see how a man's tombes are at the mercy of such a fellow, that for 6d. he would (as his own words were) 'I will juttle them together but I will make room for him' - speaking of the fullness of the middle Isle where he was to lie".⁴³ In Hallaton, Leicestershire, in 1611, the pushing and shoving for space within the dignified space of the church was so fierce that it escalated into a scuffle, and charges were brought against William Dent for violently impeding the digging of a grave. The case against Dent was dropped when it transpired that "his father was buried in the same place where the said grave was made ... his corpes not consumed, namely the heyre of his head was freshe and his brayenes evidently to be seen".⁴⁴ The physical condition of Dent's father, whose soft tissue matter had barely started to decompose, indicates that a corpse's opportunity to engage in "quiet consummation" could be startlingly brief before it re-entered the world of the living.

⁴² *The Sermons of John Donne*, Ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1953), 6: 362.

⁴³ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 1660-69*, Ed. R. Latham and W. Matthews, 11 vols., (London: Bell and Hyman, 1970-83), 5: 87, 90.

⁴⁴ Leicestershire Record Office, I D 41/13/35, 67, cited in Marshall, *Beliefs*, 289.

The circumstances of burial, then, commonly resulted in corpses re-emerging back into the world of the living through accident or unavoidable restrictions on space between the living and the dead. And yet while the graveyard, as the observations made by Dekker, Davies and Pepys suggest, proved to be a frequent point of interaction between the living and the dead, it was certainly not the only location at which the living came into close contact with corpses. Indeed, dead bodies commonly found other routes back into the land of the living. In the case of *mumia* – medicine produced from human corpses and generally sold in the form of ointments or powder – reincorporation of the dead into the living community was a literal process. The consumption of the cannibalistic open secret that was *mumia* in early modern Europe has been well documented. Officially-speaking, as William Arens has demonstrated, the idea of cannibalism itself appalled civilised Christian nations (who often cited evidence of savage man-eating to justify their often-violent colonisation and civilisation of the New World), and in literature from the period anthropophagy was commonly associated with unsavoury practices such as revenge.⁴⁵ Despite such misgivings, however, there prevailed a commonly-held and officially-sanctioned belief in the curative powers of corpse medicine: as essayist Michel de Montaigne relates matter-of-factly, “Physicians ... are not afraid to use a corpse in any way that serves our health, and will apply it either internally or externally”.⁴⁶ The faith placed in what Louise Noble terms “medicinal cannibalism”⁴⁷ appears to be constructed around the notion that by ingesting corpse materials, one gains the strength of the person consumed. Simply put,

⁴⁵ See William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (Oxford: OUP, 1980), 23-5 and *passim*; and Raymond J. Rice, “Cannibalism and the Act of Revenge in Tudor-Stuart Drama”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 44/2 (Spring, 2004), 297-316.

⁴⁶ Michel de Montaigne, “On Cannibals”, in *Essays*, trans. J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1993), 105-119, 114.

⁴⁷ Louise Noble, *Medicinal Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

subscribers to corpse medicine sought to receive life from dead human flesh – a desire which echoes the transubstantiated holy sacraments of Catholic communion, and therefore seems ill-suited to a Protestant culture which “recoiled phobically from the very aspects of medieval Christianity that might conceivably have allowed mummy-eating a comfortable niche”.⁴⁸ Despite this curious double-standard, the taste in Europe for “human flesh, fat, blood or bone – usually drunk or topically applied” persisted well into the eighteenth century.⁴⁹

Remnants of medieval supernaturalism also lingered in the methodology of murder trials in early modern England. Defendants were also sometimes required to become closer acquainted with cadavers due to the popular belief that a corpse would bleed if touched or approached again by the murderer.⁵⁰ Although this test, like the consumption of corpse medicine, is rooted in the same sorts of early Christian beliefs that the Reformation did away with, it appears to have remained a trusted method of forensic examination into the seventeenth century, with positive results taken as proof direct from the Almighty of the defendant’s guilt. The testimony of a murdered body was seemingly enough to convince Wandsworth court of Arnold Cosby’s culpability for the murder of the Lord Burke in 1591. When Cosby’s attempt to flee from the scene of the crime was hindered by an uncooperative horse, he hid “behind ye house where the dead corpes laie, at which time all the woundes in the Lord Boorkes bodie did bleede afresh”.⁵¹ What is most interesting about the case,

⁴⁸ Schwyzer, *Archaeologies*, 71-2.

⁴⁹ Richard Sugg, “‘Good Physic but Bad Food’: Early Modern Attitudes to Medicinal Cannibalism and its Suppliers”, *Social History of Medicine*, 19/2 (August 2006), 225-240, 225.

⁵⁰ Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

⁵¹ Henry Carey Hudson, *The arraignment, examination, confession and judgement of Arnold Cosbye: who wilfully murdered the Lord Burke* (London: E. Alde for Edward White, 1591), sigs. A2-B4v.

however, is that the evidence provided by Lord Burke's bleeding wounds *after* his death appears to have been considered more authoritative by the Lord Chamberlain than even the definitive eye-witness testimony which the victim himself provided in the moments *before* his death. Indeed, the Lord Chamberlain does not even mention in his closing statement Burke's incriminating last words.⁵² It is unlikely that all murder trials hinged on the evidence provided by the "just judgements of God"⁵³ via excessively bleeding cadavers, and yet this case certainly indicates that early modern courts attributed great significance to the testimony of dead bodies – so much so that Lord Burke's word appears to have been worth more dead than alive.

The belief the dead could 'speak,' as it were, through their (often excessively) bleeding wounds in order to incriminate those guilty of murder was, to Shakespeare's audience, a tangible reminder that, as Macbeth fears, "blood will have blood" in a form of natural justice capable of rooting out even "The secret'st man of blood" (3.5.142, 146). The idea finds expression in some of Shakespeare's most powerful invocations of justice. In *Macbeth*, the ghost of Banquo appears with the wounds of "twenty mortal murders" on his head to haunt his murderer (3.4.93). "If thou canst nod, speak too", Macbeth urges, but Banquo's ghost is famously silent, and allows his bleeding wounds to accuse the man who ordered his death: "Thou canst not say I did it", Macbeth contends, "never shake / Thy gory locks at me!" (3.4.58-9) Macbeth's wife is equally troubled by the blood of King Duncan, which plagues her in quantities so vast – "Yet who would have / thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" – that she cannot wash it from her hands: "Out, damned spot! Out, I say!" (5.1.28-9, 26). A more explicit reference by Shakespeare to the

⁵² Ibid., sig. B3.

⁵³ Ibid., sig. B2v.

superstition of wound testimony may be found in *Richard III* (c.1591). Dead King Henry's wounds, we are told, "Open their congealed mouths and bleed afresh" at the approach of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, whose presence "exhales this blood, / From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells" (1.2.56, 58-9). "Thy deeds, inhuman and unnatural", decries Henry's daughter-in-law Lady Anne, "Provokes this deluge most unnatural" (1.2.60-1). Although it is sheer conjecture as to whether or not this effect would have ever been shown on the early modern stage, Anne's words describe vividly the rationale behind the belief, which sees wounds become "mouths" that provide sanguine testimony from beyond the veil of death.

Shakespeare takes the idea of wound testimony a step further in *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* (c. 1599) when he depicts Caesar's corpse as communicating not just the identity of his murderers, but also their motives, as well as the emotions of the victim. Presenting Caesar's dead body to the plebeians, Mark Antony proclaims:

I tell you that which you yourselves do know,
Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me. But were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny. (3.2.220-6)

Caesar's "mouths" certainly appear to speak in the bloody manner traditionally expected of mortal wounds. In the scene prior to his public address, Antony views Caesar's body in the presence of the murderous senators and despairs his lack of "as many eyes as thou hast wounds, / Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood" (3.1.214-15). Unlike the bodies of Lord Burke and King Henry, however, whose wounds, as superstition dictates, identify the murderer

whose *actus reus* is responsible for causing them, in the case of Caesar the identities of those responsible for his death are already common knowledge. With finger-pointing thus redundant, the dead Caesar's body instead communicates information regarding the quality of the act, or at least is said to do so by rhetorical maestro Antony. In stark contrast to Brutus' defence of noble "pity" (3.1.184) – "I slew my best lover for the / good of Rome" (3.2.36-7) – Caesar's wounds divulge a *mens rea* of "private griefs" which led to "bloody treason" (3.2.209, 189).

As previously indicated, the testimony of Caesar's wounds is in fact based on subjective interpretation, which may be an ironic comment by Shakespeare on the faith that trials such as that of Arnold Cosby placed in the reliability of the superstition. The interpreter is Mark Antony, whose motives are palpably biased. Though he shrewdly claims to be "no orator" (3.2.213), Antony inverts the idea of wound testimony by speaking *for* the wounds of freshly-murdered Caesar, even while professing to the citizens in attendance the exact opposite – that the "poor dumb mouths ... /... speak for me". Antony's rhetorical skills are the most significant factors towards inciting the revolt which he desires. His voice "paradoxically translates itself into reality", as David Lucking argues, "precisely by denying its capacity to influence reality at all, converting what appears to be vacancy – silence, gaping wounds, death itself – into active and vocal presence".⁵⁴ "They that have done this deed are honourable", Antony

⁵⁴ David Lucking *The Shakespearean Name: Essays on "Romeo and Juliet", "The Tempest", and Other Plays* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007), 133. Here, I use Antony's words as an example in Shakespearean drama of the dead 'speaking', or being imagined as doing so, and thus taking on a quality traditionally reserved for the living. There is, however, a large body of discourse related to interpreting and appropriating the speech of wounds in early modern drama, which lies outside the scope of this essay. Lucking (2007) explores the ways in which "the word can be made flesh ... precisely because broken flesh can be made word" (133) as it relates to wounded bodies both living and dead in Shakespeare (131-156); for a gender-based discussion of Shakespeare's wound-centric Roman plays, see Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (Routledge: New York, 1997). Kahn reads Caesar's punctured

reiterates, and “What private griefs they have, alas, I know not, / That made them do it” (3.2.208-10). Evidence to contradict honourable Brutus, Antony suggests, could come only from the tongueless wounds of the victim.

And yet it is precisely Antony’s reliance on Caesar’s corpse as a tool of justice that sways the plebeians from applauding the actions of “noble Brutus” to condemning Brutus and his fellow conspirators as “traitors, villains” (3.2.12, 3.2.198). Antony’s heartfelt speech capitalises on the public’s belief in Caesar’s post-mortem testimony in order to supplant their initial sentiments – “We are blest that Rome is rid of him” (3.2.66) – with a frenetic desire to see justice done: “Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!” (3.2.201). Antony compensates for Caesar’s inability to speak by identifying individual stab marks and imagining responses which the corpse might give if interviewed. Caesar’s blood, anthropomorphised by Antony, followed Brutus’ knife “As rushing out of doors, to be resolved / If Brutus so unkindly knocked or no” (3.2.177-8). “When the noble Caesar saw him [Brutus] stab”, Antony continues, “Ingratitude, more strong than traitors’ arms, / Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart” (3.2.181-3). Antony presents claims to the plebeians, based on imaginary testimony by a dead body, as evidence no less tangible than the blood-stained robe which he holds in his hands. Dead Caesar’s “dumb mouths”, invoked and interpreted by Antony, thus destabilise entirely what the plebeians identify as “grievous fault” and “justice” (3.2.76, 4.2.79).

The response given by the plebeians mirrors, albeit in an exaggerated manner, attitudes towards crime and punishment in early modern England, whereby in the case of serious offenders, the mutilated corpse was not simply a tool of justice but also frequently the final outcome. As Michel Foucault has

body as a “feminized object through which the conspirators try to restore their manly virtue as citizens of the republic” (17).

taught us, public executions were a fundamental part of the instrumentation of discipline and punishment in the period, which were always spectacularly on show. Alongside beliefs in wound testimony, the death penalty comprised another facet of the early modern judicial system in which living qualities were taken up by (or, more precisely, forced upon) the dead in a highly visible and symbolic fashion. To speak of living death in relation to rituals of execution is, it may be argued, something of a contradiction in terms. The primary mechanic of the death penalty is, after all, grounded in a firm distinction between two contrasting states of being – alive and dead – which in turn signify the equally binary positions of unpunished and punished respectively. And yet the manner in which the death penalty was carried out in early modern England frequently saw bodily expiration as but a single part of a wider-reaching “theatre of punishment” in which the body of the victim became a carrier of state doctrine, and was punished excessively in order to underscore the power of the sovereign.⁵⁵ I discuss in greater detail the processes and ramifications of public executions, and the influence that they had on early modern drama in Chapter Two of this thesis, suffice to say for now that, alongside more performative and ritualistic aspects of the punishment, public execution often included extended physical torment and mutilation, usually in the form of hanging, drawing and quartering. It was an integral part of this brutal display of power that the victim remained conscious for as much of their punishment as possible. In the hands of a skilled executioner, death became something quantifiable which could be approached in degrees, and as part of their execution proceedings men and women were brought to ‘near-’ or ‘half-dead’ states. The practice was by no means a precise art, and it was not unknown for the executioner to misjudge

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 116.

the amount of life left in his victim. Such an error had adverse consequences in 1572 for the hangman of John Storie, one of Mary I's most prominent supporters in the years of Protestant persecution. Raphael Holinshead reports that Storie was "hanged till he was halfe-dead", and then "cut downe and stripped" in preparation for further punishment. Storie, however, had other ideas:

And (which is not to be forgot) when the executioner had cut off his privie members he rushing up upon a sudden gave him a blow upon the eare, to the great wonder of all that stood by.⁵⁶

Storie's (understandable) vigour, even while his body must have appeared lifeless enough to not merit proper restraints, is testament to how effectively executioners could blur the distinction between life and death in ways unlike any other form of contemporaneous engagement between the living and the dead. In other cases, however, presiding officials deigned to show "mercie" of sorts to hanging convicts before continuing with the sentence.⁵⁷ George Whetstone records the executions of fourteen Catholic traitors at Holborn on the 20th and 21st September 1586, six years prior to Shakespeare's emergence onto the London theatrical scene. The condemned men were each sentenced to be "hanged until they were halfe dead, their bowels to be brente before their faces", their "traiterous harts burned, and bodillesse heads advanced to the view and comforte of manye thousands of people".⁵⁸ Executed in order of "most mallitious", the first seven men were "executed somewhat neere the severity of their judgement".⁵⁹ The next seven, however, repented of their crimes, and so were "more favourably used", according to Whetstone, as they "hung untill they

⁵⁶ Raphael Holinshead, *The Third volume of Chronicles* (London: Henry Denham, 1586), 1225.

⁵⁷ George Whetstone, *The censure of a loyall subiect* (London: Richard Jones, 1587), sig. A3v.

⁵⁸ Ibid., sig. A3.

⁵⁹ Ibid., sig. A3v.

were even altogether dead, before ye rest of their judgement was executed".⁶⁰

That Whetstone, and clearly the Holborn executioner, considered this act a "token of exceeding mercye"⁶¹ indicates that those present were aware that the latter seven men were beyond the pain of disembowelment. That the remainder of the sentence was inflicted upon the corpses, on the other hand, suggests that it was deemed in the interests of justice to treat the dead men as though they were still alive.

Certainly part of the reason for punishments being carried out in their entirety despite the condemned having given up the proverbial ghost before the promised end was, as Foucault and several others since have argued, the symbolic importance of doing so.⁶² Observing the fate of the bodies of criminals and traitors, Whetstone writes, proves to be a "general comfort for al good subjects, and a fearefull example to al traitors".⁶³ Carrying out the allotted punishment regardless of whether or not the convict was still alive was as important in demonstrating the procession of justice as setting the severed heads of traitors upon the Great Stone Gate of London Bridge. Such posthumous mutilation, intended just as much to convey a message as to punish the guilty, was in evidence during the early years of the Reformation: in 1538, for example, the remains of venerated Catholic martyr Thomas Becket were taken from their Canterbury shrine and scattered.⁶⁴ During Mary's reign, Catholics reciprocated with similar guerrilla assaults on the Protestant dead: in Cambridge the wife of Protestant figurehead Peter Martyr was exhumed from

⁶⁰ Ibid., sig. A3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² In addition to Foucault, see Randall McGowen, "Power and Humanity, or Foucault Among the Historians", in Colin Jones and Roy Porter eds., *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body* (London: Routledge, 1994), 91-112, and Gillian Murray Kendall, "Overkill in Shakespeare", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 43/1 (Spring 1992), 33-50.

⁶³ Whetstone, *The censure*, sig. A3.

⁶⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 412.

her grave in Christ Church, Oxford, and left on a dunghill, while in 1557 the carcasses of two leading reformers were exhumed, tried, and publicly burned.⁶⁵ Broadly speaking, the messages that Protestants and Catholics sought to convey, and thus the quality of their engagements with the dead, were different – where Protestants abused corpses, writes Schwyzer, “it was on the grounds that they had no spiritual significance; where Catholics abused corpses, it was because they did”.⁶⁶ The rule, it should be noted, is not absolute: “the vindictive scattering of Becket’s bones in particular suggests a desire to strike, through the body, at the departed soul”.⁶⁷

The rich tradition of symbolic corpse desecration and posthumous execution within living memory by the early seventeenth century may well have influenced the mutilations suffered by many dead bodies in Shakespeare’s works. Macbeth’s head is lopped off of his corpse after his defeat at the hands of Macduff (*Macbeth*, 5.7.98 SD); the hapless poet Cinna in *Julius Caesar* comes a cropper of the plebeian mob which plans to “tear him to pieces” for “his bad verses” (3.3.26, 28); Alexander Iden imagines that by stabbing the freshly-dead body of Jack Cade, his may also “thrust thy soul to hell” (*2 Henry VI*, 4.10.65). Cade’s body is further dishonoured by being decapitated and, like the late Mrs Martyr, flung onto the dunghill “for crows to feed upon” (4.10.70). The villainous Tamora’s cadaver is similarly disgraced, thrown forth “to beasts and birds of prey” (*Titus Andronicus*, 5.3.198). These examples, framed as both further punishments against the deceased as well as examples to the living, demonstrate vividly the same dual purpose as the post-hanging disembowelments that took place in Holborn, and would have doubtless been

⁶⁵ Marshall, *Beliefs*, 122-3.

⁶⁶ Schwyzer, *Archaeologies*, 111, n. 8.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

understood in the same light as public executions by Shakespeare's audience. Shakespeare invokes the spectacular executions which took place across London as he reminds his audience that death is no impediment to the dispensation of justice, and a dead criminal may fall subject to the same punishment as a living one.

Setting aside the notion of corpse defilement in order to set a public example, on a private and fundamental level the examples of mutilations and executions dramatised in the theatres and carried out for real in the thoroughfares of early modern London on already-dead bodies, present a forceful imposition of living qualities – specifically guilt and sensitivity to punishment – upon the dead. *Titus Andronicus*' Aaron takes the notion to a gruesome extreme when he very literally imposes the living quality of speech upon dead men, whom he has "digged up ... from their graves",

And set them upright at their dear friends' door,
[...]
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carved in Roman letters
'Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead.' (5.1.136-41)

Putting words in the mouths (or, in the terms of Shakespeare's Antony, proverbial tongues in the freshly-carved wounds) of dead men, Aaron's messages through the medium of dead flesh parody the notion of living death outlined earlier, in which the living and dead may communicate through the defilement of cadavers. Aaron also, however, comes to embody the reverse of the process which he parodies, wherein the living are re-presented as possessing qualities generally reserved for the dead. As punishment for Aaron's role in aiding and abetting Tamora, Lucius devises the following torment:

Set him breast-deep in earth and famish him:

There let him stand and rave and cry for food.
If anyone relieves or pities him,
For the offence he dies. (5.3.179-82)

“Fastened in the earth” (5.3.183), Aaron’s burial thus comes before his death – and will in fact prove to be the cause of it.

Aaron’s body, trapped in living death, presents a macabre paradox well-suited to the theatre, the practicalities of which oblige living actors to routinely ‘die’ on stage night after night. Polonius refers to the practice in *Hamlet*: “I did enact Julius Caesar: I was killed i’t’h’Capitol” (3.2.86). Other forms of art, however, also embraced the transposition of qualities of the dead upon the living. Most prominent among these were the myriad monuments and paintings which followed the *memento mori* tradition. A great deal of literature already exists discussing the ubiquitous presence of the iconography of death in medieval and early modern Europe and what this suggests about the ways in which people viewed death at the time. Clare Gittings suggests that the prevalence of skulls, in art between 1558 and 1660 reveals “the omnipresence of death in England”.⁶⁸ Moreover, no motif, Michael Neill contends, “enjoyed greater popularity, in northern Europe at least, than the Dance of Death”⁶⁹, a term used to refer to the dancing skeletal figures – often anonymous, their former lives only suggested by occasional strands of threadbare clothing – so common in visual art from the period. More than simple artistic flourishes, the purpose of *memento mori* was to impress upon the viewer a philosophical contemplation of death, urging them “to remember his or her mortality and then to act accordingly”⁷⁰. Emblems such as skulls and dancing skeletons – stripped

⁶⁸ Clare Gittings, ‘Sacred and Secular: 1558-1600’, in Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings, eds., *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester: MUP, 1999), 147-73, 151.

⁶⁹ Neill, *Issues*, 51.

⁷⁰ Engel, *Mapping Mortality*, 215.

of flesh and identity – represented a general death which would come to all men: “There is great difference in men”, wrote Strode, “and greater respect had to some than to others ... but when death cometh ... then there will be no such difference in the grave, neither doth Death know any such difference for he spareth none”.⁷¹

Often, however, *memento mori* took a more personal form. Those who could afford it, for example, could choose to be laid to rest in *transi* tombs, which represented the deceased in effigy as two bodies, one on top of the other. Above, Carol Rutter tells us, “lay the gorgeously memorialized *gisant*, representing the body ... in all the splendour of his worldly substance”, while below lay the “ghastly *transi*, the same body exposed post mortem as a naked corpse, a rotting cadaver feasting worms, a mummy so desiccated that the skeleton threatened to pierce the skin stretched over it”.⁷² Presenting life and death in “the same visual space”,⁷³ such tombs simultaneously confront and circumvent the levelling effect of death by embracing the inevitable anonymity and corruption of the human body with the lower image even as the prominent top form memorialises and flatters the life of the individual concerned. Indeed, *transi* tombs are effectively bilateral, functioning as much as monuments to eternal life as to mortal decay: looked at from top to bottom, these effigies present viewers with a graphic impression of the decomposition of the human body; viewed from bottom to top the same tombs seem to anticipate the rising of the dead in new and perfect bodies at the general resurrection.

Similarly ambiguous is the portrait of an ageing Queen Elizabeth, by an unknown artist (Fig. 1). In the painting, the Queen’s head rests on her hand,

⁷¹ Strode, *Anatomy*, sig. E3r.

⁷² Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and representation on Shakespeare’s stage* (London: Routledge, 2001), 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

with “her cheekbones”, notes Rutter, “standing out from her shrunken flesh”.⁷⁴ A skeleton and a figure representing Time flank her; the former looming over her shoulder proffering an hourglass and coffin. The painting suggests Elizabeth poised at the very instant of death, as cherubim delicately remove her crown, and a book seems to slip from her hand. The portrait appears to have been painted after Elizabeth’s death, and therefore depicts both a dead woman as living, and a living woman at the point of death, further blurring distinctions between life and death. John Donne commissioned a similar painting of himself a scant few months before his death, in which he “‘remembered’ the future”⁷⁵ by posing as his own corpse (Fig. 2). Izaak Walton relates:

Several charcoal fires being first made in his large study, he brought with him into that place a winding sheet in his hand, and having put off all his clothes, had this sheet put on him, and so tied with knots at his head and feet, and his hands so placed as dead bodies are usually fitted, to be shrouded and put into their coffin or grave ... with his eyes shut and with so much of the sheet turned aside as might show his lean, pale and death-like face.⁷⁶

While Aaron’s protracted execution in *Titus Andronicus* occurs offstage, Donne’s portrait shows us what Shakespeare does not – that is, the bizarre sight of a man prepared for his own funeral before he has even expired. Moreover, in a darkly comic example of truth being stranger than fiction, Donne’s morbid activities are entirely self-conscious and self-imposed: while Aaron’s fate is presented as punishment, Donne goes to elaborate measures to achieve the same effect; he is an eager explorer of death rather than one who merely suffers it. Donne’s portrait confuses distinctions between life and death in a slightly different though no less significant manner to that of Elizabeth:

⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁶ Izaak Walton, *The Life of John Donne* (London: by J.G., 1658), 112.

Donne's portrait depicts how he expected his body to appear on Judgement Day,⁷⁷ and so presents both a living man as dead, and a dead man captured on the verge of waking into new life.

Donne's portrait is an elegant contradiction, one which simultaneously represents and contradicts an idea of living death. On the one hand, the intention of the portrait is to depict the dead form of a living subject, and the net result is simply a painting of a figure in a death-shroud, who, despite Walton's descriptions of Donne's face as "lean, pale and death-like", could just as well be asleep.⁷⁸ While the shroud and closed eyes suggest death, they do not confirm it. His face is "death-like", but not dead. The strange existential mesh presented in the painting of Donne, then, is the result of a failure on the artist's part (a failure which he is certainly not alone in) to present 'dead' in an unmistakable and overt fashion. On the other hand, in a painting where life and death are coterminous, it requires just as much effort on the part of the observer to read Donne as 'living dead' as it does to read him as 'dead' or, indeed, as it required for Donne to pose as a dead man in the first place. The same can be said of Elizabeth I's portrait: we are aware that the subject of the portrait is very much dead, and yet the figure in the painting is not. Her face is gaunt but not corpse-like, "not so much weary as thoughtful",⁷⁹ and were it not for the book slipping from her grasp and the skeleton on her left, we would have no reason to question her vitality. The artist's representations of time – the realm of the living – and death, where time ceases to signify, thus freezes his subject between life and death even as the life-like depiction of Elizabeth and the spectator's own knowledge of her death defy any middle ground.

⁷⁷ Lewis Lapham, *The End of the World* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1997), 98.

⁷⁸ Walton, *The Life of John Donne*, 112.

⁷⁹ Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 9.

As it pertains to *transi* tombs or the portraits of Donne and Elizabeth – all of which were designed by the living to be seen by the living – the experience of the spectator is integral to the overall impression of living death that such monuments create, either because like the tombs they are designed to convey a message, or because, like Donne and Elizabeth, a proper understanding of them requires some level of viewer awareness. Importantly, however, conflations of life and death, or forays into the strange grey area between the two states of being, were not simply the result of active interpretation by the living in early modern English culture. On the contrary, corpses in Renaissance England sometimes remained active participants in the world of the living for a considerable time after death. There existed a rich cultural and literary heritage of walking or *revenant* corpses, which had been prominent in medieval folklore, and despite the best efforts of the Protestant Church to eliminate such tales from posterity, the ghost story was an established cultural trope by the early seventeenth century.⁸⁰ Shakespeare may even have grown up with one such tale passed down by generations of Stratford residents concerning Holy Trinity, Shakespeare's parish church. It was said that "a daughter of the prominent Clopton family, dead of the plague and placed in the family's tomb under the chancel, was buried prematurely. When the vault was next opened, she was found leaning against the wall at the bottom of the stairs, still in her shroud".⁸¹ More readily verifiable are the active social lives of the celebrity cadavers such as Mary Queen of Scots. Mary entertained the crowd at her beheading in 1587 with a "sensational return and grinning slapstick": when the executioner went to

⁸⁰ See chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis for more on the cultural tropes of the ghost and the revenant.

⁸¹ Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 14. Rutter adds that doubts abound "about the story's veracity – though not its circulation" (181, n.32). See also Patricia Wainwright, *Trinity Tales – Some Lesser Known Stories of Shakespeare's Church* (Stratford-upon-Avon: The Parochial Church Council of Holy Trinity, 1983), 28-29.

raise her head for the customary 'view of the assembly,' it slipped from his grasp leaving him holding only a "dressing of lawn", the wig which Mary wore for her final public address.⁸² In so leaping from the executioner's clutch, Mary's head appeared to age before the eyes of the crowd in a darkly comic facsimile of the process of deterioration which afflicts the living. Although she was only forty-four at the time of death, Robert Wyngfield reports that her hair was "as grey as one of three score and ten years old and polled very short". Mary's final posthumous trick, however, was her most shocking: "Her lips stirred up and down almost a quarter of an hour after her head was cut off".⁸³

Post-decapitation sentience was not an unknown or necessarily unexpected phenomenon. Biologically, it is a distinct possibility and one which public executions were wont to take advantage of.⁸⁴ Rutter informs us that the executioners' custom of raising the head for the view of all the assembly was not, in fact, so that the audience could see the head, but so that the head could see the audience in its last seconds of consciousness: "The master craftsman in decapitation could get the head off and up before the brain stopped thinking, before the eyes stopped seeing".⁸⁵ The belief in this brief, painful afterlife appears to have been prevalent. Indeed, experiments which sought to

⁸² Robert Wyngfield, "An Account of the Execution of Mary, the Late Queen of Scots (1587)", in *The Clarendon Historical Society Reprints*, series II, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1884-1886), 1: 11.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ It remains unclear whether a head dies the moment it is severed or if it lives briefly thereafter. Geoffrey Abbott, *Severed Heads: British Beheadings through the Ages* (London: André Deutsch, 2000) writes that "there is sufficient oxygen remaining in the brain to prolong consciousness for perhaps two, three or even more seconds after decapitation" meaning that it is possible that the victim could see "the ground or basket coming up to meet him or her" or even witness "the gloating faces of those clustered around the scaffold" (19-20). Mary Roach, *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers* (New York: Norton, 2003), postulates that the head may remain cognisant for up to twelve seconds.

⁸⁵ Rutter, "Talking Heads", in Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Bridget Escolme eds., *Shakespeare and the Making of Theatre* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 102-127, 119.

determine the length of time that a decapitated head remained conscious persisted well into the nineteenth century.⁸⁶

The cadaver of Mary's cousin, Queen Elizabeth I, enacted a similarly animated living death in the month that followed her expiration in 1603. In accordance with her own command, between Elizabeth's death on March 24 and her funeral on April 28, Elizabeth's body remained in the palace at Westminster untouched by embalmers. Not only did her corpse lie quite literally in State, but her subordinates continued to treat her body as though she were still living. Understandably, perhaps, Giovanni Scammelli, the Venetian ambassador, appears to have been perplexed by the turn of events:

[T]he late Queen by her own orders has neither been opened [a process which involved the body cavity being disembowelled and seared with a torch to prevent further decay], nor, indeed, seen by any living soul save by three of her ladies. It has been taken to Westminster ... the Palace, all hung with mournings. There the Council waits on her continually with the same ceremony, the same expenditure, down to her very household and table service, as though she were not wrapped in many a fold of cerecloth, and hid in such a heap of lead, of coffin, of pall, but was walking as she used to do at this season, about the alleys of her gardens.⁸⁷

One may see in Elizabeth's posthumous court activity echoes of Old Hamlet, who continues to roam Elsinore "in his habit as he lived" (3.4.140) long after death should have put a stop to such wanderings.⁸⁸ Unlike Old Hamlet, however, Elizabeth's roaming is neither the result of murder most foul nor against the monarch's wishes. Instead, she remains a presence in the court as

⁸⁶ Dr Regnard and Dr Loye, in *Progrès Médical* (9 July 1887), cited in "Death by Decapitation", *British Medical Journal*, 2 (23 July 1887), 195-6.

⁸⁷ Giovanni Scammelli, Letter, 12 April 1603, in Horatio Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Venetian IX, 1592-1603* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1900), 3.

⁸⁸ The date of *Hamlet's* composition, a topic of much debate, has been placed by various sources as c.1601, although the date may have been as early as 1600, three years before Elizabeth's death. See Introduction, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, by William Shakespeare, in Bate and Rasmussen, eds., *RSC*, 1918-1923, 1922. The earliest manuscript is the First Quarto published in 1603 during the reign of King James I. It is generally considered a "bad" quarto which presents an inaccurate representation of the play as it originally appeared on stage in the year(s) preceding.

the result of her “own [living] orders” – orders which represent a very self-aware exploration by the living Queen of her own death in the same vein as Donne’s 1631 portrait. Indeed, if the account of Elizabeth Southwell, one of Queen Elizabeth’s ladies-in-waiting, is to be believed, Elizabeth’s pre-emptive exploration of the afterlife may have been even more delving than Donne’s, extending not just to the imaginative but to the spiritual as well. Southwell claims that another of the Queen’s maidservants, Elizabeth Guildford, witnessed a premature manifestation of the Queen’s ghost in the weeks before the Queen died which “vanished away” when Guildford approached it.⁸⁹ The treatment afforded her corpse came as the result of Elizabeth confronting the reality of her own death in advance, and imposing her considerable will upon it: her dead body remained empowered precisely because her living body made the necessary arrangements. Where the Ghost is concerned, in narrative terms at least, the courtly escapades of *Hamlet’s* Ghost occur, in contrast to Elizabeth’s, against Old Hamlet’s will as a result of “his foul and most unnatural murder” (1.5.29) and to the surprise of those he once commanded. And yet if we consider *Hamlet* in terms of performance, just as Elizabeth predicts her future as a cadaver, so too the actor who portrays the Ghost must imagine himself as a “dead corpse” (1.4.33).

The Queen’s living death, however, was a twofold process that stands as testament to the difficulty of truly imagining oneself not simply as dead, but as corpse with all that being a corpse entails. In Elizabeth’s case, the inevitable decomposition of her earthly form resulted in her body engaging more actively with court life than perhaps she had anticipated. Shortly after Robert Cecil apparently overrode her commands and arranged for her body to be embalmed,

⁸⁹ Catherine Loomis, “Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with text]”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 26/3 (September 1996), 482-509, 486.

Southwell records the late Queen making what Rutter considers a “spectacular comeback”.⁹⁰

[H]er bodie being seared up was brought to whit hall. where being watched everie night by 6 severall Ladies. my selfe that night there watching as one of them being all about the bodie which was fast nayled up aboard coffin with leaves of leas covered with velvet, her bodie and head break with such a crack that spleated the wood lead and cer cloth. whereupon the next day she was fain to be new trimmed up.⁹¹

Thus, like the bones of Old Hamlet which so famously “burst their cerements” (1.1.29), Elizabeth’s corpse appears to have done the same in front of a crowd of witnesses.

The accuracy of Southwell’s recount is questionable. Her assertion that Elizabeth’s body was embalmed, for example, is at odds with other reports. Pamphlets published to commemorate Elizabeth’s funeral describe the body as “balmed”,⁹² but the word may mean only that the corpse was “anointed with preservatives”.⁹³ Elizabeth had apparently not been opened when Scammelli wrote in early April, and John Manningham, also well-placed within the court, testifies that “[i]t is certaine the Queene was not embowelled, but wrapt up in cere cloth”.⁹⁴ Official records of acts of the Privy Council from late March and April 1603 are scarce, but there is nothing mentioned in these, nor in Cecil’s own notes and letters from the same period, to suggest that any procedures

⁹⁰ Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 13.

⁹¹ Loomis, “Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript”, 486-487.

⁹² Henry Chettle, *Englandes mourning garment* (London: Valentine Simmes for Thomas Millington, 1603), sig. F4; see also Henry Petowe, *Elizabetha quasi vivens* (London: E. Allde for M. Lawe, 1603), sig. C2.

⁹³ Loomis, “Southwell’s Manuscript”, 494.

⁹⁴ John Manningham, *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple 1602-1603*, ed. Robert Parker Sorlien (University of Rhode Island: University Press of New England, 1976), 223. John Chamberlain, whose letters to Dudley Carleton are generally considered to be reliable, also writes that Elizabeth’s body “was not opened but wrapt up”. See *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), 1: 190. As Rutter diligently notes, however, Chamberlain’s observations on the matter were recorded very shortly after Elizabeth’s death. Thus it is not inconceivable that his comments predate an embalmmnt if there was one. See Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 181, n.30.

contrary to the Queen's orders were carried out on her body.⁹⁵ "Given the length of time required to prepare a royal funeral", Loomis posits, "the council would have been ill-advised to leave Elizabeth's corpse unopened",⁹⁶ although we can but speculate.

While the factual validity of Southwell's manuscript is doubtful, then, it is nevertheless possible that Elizabeth's corpse exploded in the manner Southwell describes:

Elizabeth's corpse had been soldered into a lead casket within which the gases produced by decomposing tissues could accumulate and cause the splitting of flesh, lead, and wood as well as the odor. The "crack" that Southwell heard as the body burst through the coffin could be the result of the gases meeting an open flame if the six several ladies had "watche candles".⁹⁷

The scenario would have been much more likely if Elizabeth's corpse had remained untouched, as the soft tissues usually removed during embalment would have hastened the process of decomposition. Southwell's testimony, on the other hand, suggests that Elizabeth's body was embalmed, or else "the breath of her bodie would a ben much worse".⁹⁸ Embalmed or not, given the length of time between death and burial, and the conditions in which Elizabeth's body was stored, the phenomenon Southwell describes could have easily occurred over time, although Southwell's sequence of events would suggest that the explosion occurred soon after the Queen's death.

The veracity of Southwell's account, however, is less pertinent an issue than whether or not the story was widely disseminated. Would, as Rutter asks,

⁹⁵ Loomis, "Southwell's Manuscript", 495.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 495.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 497. Loomis' assumption of there being "watche candles" is based on a lecture given by Francis Tate on 30 April 1600, in which Tate describes a corpse laid out with "candels set burning over yt on a table day and night, and the body continually attended or watched". Tate does add, however, that "the custome of burning candels be now growen into disuse, being thought superstitious". See Tate, "Of the Antiquity", 1: 216.

⁹⁸ Loomis, "Southwell's Manuscript", 487.

the tale have “circulated as common knowledge, as gossip?”⁹⁹ Given the sensational nature of the story and the fact that the event was attended by six witnesses, it might be expected that news was widely reported. Southwell’s description of Elizabeth’s exploding corpse, however, is largely uncorroborated. Part of the reason that we do not hear of any supporting statements from Elizabeth’s other attendants, Loomis suggests, may have been due to a general lack of faith in female testimony during the early modern period, which makes it unlikely the women would have been believed even if they had spoken of the matter. For her part, Southwell claims that reports from both men and women were suppressed by Robert Cecil himself, the influence of whom was so strong that “no man durst speak yt publicklye”.¹⁰⁰ Certainly, the literal and violent division of the body politic at a time when the political divide between England and Scotland was to be figuratively sutured by a joint monarchy, had scandalous connotations. Given the potential for revolution as James made his way to England, it was perhaps “essential to the survival of Elizabeth’s councillors and courtiers that they keep even the rumor of an exploding corpse a secret”.¹⁰¹

Whatever the reason for the silence surrounding Southwell’s story, the closest thing to another reference to exploding Elizabeth comes from John Chamberlain who, in the week of Elizabeth’s death, reports nothing of unseemly eruptions but does refer to rumours spread by “the papists ... utterly voyde of truth” which he considers better dismissed undisclosed than repeated.¹⁰² Would many playwrights or theatregoers have been privy to the same sources as Chamberlain? It is impossible to say, although we might imagine that in light of Cecil’s alleged attempt to silence witnesses to Elizabeth’s eruption,

⁹⁹ Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Loomis, “Southwell’s Manuscript”, 497.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 498.

¹⁰² Chamberlain, *Letters*, 188.

performances of the scene in *Hamlet* which sees the prince swear the witnesses to his father's "dead corpse" to "never make known what you have seen tonight" (1.5.158) may have taken on an altogether different quality for certain Londoners in attendance.

Whether Southwell's account is true or not, the tantalising suggestion that stories of Elizabeth's living death might have persisted even as rumour in early modern London, combined with the possibility that such rumours may have been actively discredited, only highlights the fact that Elizabeth's "domestic performance",¹⁰³ like *Hamlet's* theatrical one, is as much a retrospective creation as it is a predictive envisioning. In both cases, the living death on display is a product of retrospection, both in terms of the dead body behaving as though it is alive, and in terms of it being *treated as such* through participation by the living. Elizabeth and Old Hamlet are corpses that remember and return to their living behaviour patterns. Old Hamlet stalks the battlements two months after his death, and Elizabeth – whose living death is less a return to courtly existence than a continuation of it – is waited on by servants. Both performances of life are assisted by props: the Ghost wears "the very armour he had on / When he th'ambitious Norway combated" (1.1.69-70), while Elizabeth retains her own "props, 'her very household and table service'".¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, despite these elaborate theatrical measures, their returns cannot occur unless acknowledged by the living. Without such acknowledgement, neither can truly be said to have returned at all. The Venetian ambassador in Elizabeth's court refuses to play along: to him, the Queen is unequivocally dead, wrapped in cerecloth and coffined. And yet to the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, who look back to the living Queen every bit as much as the dying Queen looked forwards to her dead self,

¹⁰³ Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Elizabeth remains as central to court life dead as she was when alive. In attending the deceased Queen as though she walked “as she used to”, the living death that her servants granted her corpse was a product of the same kind of retrospection manipulated by the artist of her 1610 portrait. Likewise, to *Hamlet’s* palace guards, the Ghost does not represent anything alive or human – the spectre is referred to only as an “it”, something “*like* the king that’s dead” (1.1.49; 47, my italics). It is only when Horatio, and later Hamlet, accept the Ghost’s identity – “I knew your father: These hands are not more like” (1.2.214-5) – that the Ghost ceases to look “*like* buried Denmark” (1.1.55, my italics) and *becomes* him. By extension, for the audience, it is only when “it” becomes a familiar “thou” (1.1.21) that the potential “goblin damned” transforms into the character of “Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane” (1.1.25-6), and the dead becomes the living dead.

The states of living death approached by both the living and the dead in early modern England were, in brief, myriad. As Elizabeth’s courtly afterlife demonstrates, living death permeated society at all levels, from the overflowing city graveyards and plague pits, to the private chambers of the court; from the apothecaries in subtly disguised powders and unguents, to the public demonstrations of justice in courtrooms, at the gallows and in pieces on spikes above London Bridge; from the portraits and memorials commissioned by the social élite, to the theatrical stage in countless plays and productions. Living death in terms both physical and spiritual, palpable and imaginative, was a real and active part of day-to-day existence in early modern England, and its presence inevitably affected and informed the ways that people responded to life and death. Subsequent chapters of this thesis analyse in greater detail the methods by which early modern dramatists explored spaces between life and

death. These writers undoubtedly use living death in drama to respond to the palpable living death that surrounded them in London at the time, but even more significantly they recognised the potential of characters in states of living death to perform symbolically: as emblems of liminality and ambiguity, I argue, the living dead, were uniquely suited to a whole host of contemporary social, political and religious tensions. With this in mind, I would like to conclude by returning to young Giovanni's question at the start of this chapter, a question which, I propose, has an answer both terribly simple and undeniably complex: "What do the dead do, uncle?" – they perform.

Chapter 2

Fashioning Death: The Dead and Dying in *The White Devil* and *The Maiden's Tragedy*

Good Christen people, I am come hether to dye, for accordyng to the lawe and by the lawe I am judged to dye, and therefore I wyll speake nothyng against it. I am come hether to accuse no man, nor to speake any thyng of that wherof I am accused and condemned to dye, but I pray God save the kyng and sende him long to reigne over you, for a gentler nor a more mercyfull prince was there never: and to me he was ever a good, a gentle, & soveraigne lorde. And if any persone will medle of my cause, I require them to judge the best. And thus I take my leve of the worlde and of you all, and I heartely desyre you all to pray for me. O lorde have mercy on me, to God I comende my soule.¹

How's this for your headline? 'French Fries.'²

In his 1618 *Anatomie of Mortalitie*, John Strode describes death as the ultimate democratic social leveller: "There is great difference in men, and greater respect had to some then to others... but when death cometh (as surely as it will come to all sorts) then there will be no such difference in the grave".³ For Strode, once the body ceases to live, it also ceases to occupy a role in society and so the usual social distinctions applied to men and women, the high-ranking and low-ranking no longer apply. Certainly, in a practical, biological sense, there is no "great difference" between one corpse in the grave and the next. However, the democratic levelling of men and women of different social stations in death is not quite as straightforward as Strode's comment suggests. In spiritual and discursive senses, the manner by which those bodies arrive at death in early-modern England, crucially how their final moments on Earth prepare them for

¹ The final speech of Anne Boleyn, prior to her execution in the Tower of London on May 19 1536, as recorded by Edward Hall, *The union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (London, 1548), sig. PPP6r.

² The last words of convicted murderer James French, prior to his execution by electric chair in Oklahoma, 1966, from Geoff Tibballs, *The Mammoth Book of Zingers, Quips, and One-Liners* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004), 316.

³ George Strode, *The Anatomie of Mortalitie* (London: Printed by William Jones, 1618), sig. E2v.

eternity and posterity, make a great difference indeed – both for the individual facing their own death and offering their immortal souls to eternity, and for those left behind to record it. The most important tool in shaping these differences in death in those final moments is the last dying speech.

The public spectacles of theatre and capital punishment are deeply connected on a number of levels. As an ever-expanding body of scholarly criticism attests, the interrelatedness of stage and scaffold might be found in the very geography and architecture of early modern London. James Shapiro, in his chapter on *The Spanish Tragedy*, notes that Elizabethans were acutely aware of the Roman precedent of using the playhouse as a site for public executions, a tradition continued in London theatres – especially when in 1588 two priests were actually executed, one in the theatre and the other close-by.⁴ Molly Smith observes that the notorious Tyburn Tree – the first permanent structure for hangings in London, capable of hanging twenty-four traitors at a time on its triangular scaffold – was erected in 1571, during the same decade which saw the construction of the first public theatre.⁵ Andreas Höfele, meanwhile, convincingly argues for a “family resemblance” between the types of scaffolds used in public executions, animal baiting and the theatre, all of which were designed with public visibility as a priority.⁶ Sometimes the connection is less immediately obvious but no less present, as in the case of the severed heads of

⁴ James Shapiro, “‘Tragedies naturally performed’: Kyd’s Representation of Violence”, in David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 99-113, 103-4.

⁵ Molly Smith, “The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in *The Spanish Tragedy*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 32/2 (Spring, 1992), 217-232, 218.

⁶ Andreas Höfele, *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 2. As evidenced by Philip Henslowe’s dual-purpose Hope Theatre, constructed in 1614, Bear-baiting and theatrical productions occasionally took place in the same building. The Hope was reserved for “Stage Playes on Mundayes, Wednesdayes, Fridayes and Saturdayes, And for the Baiting of Beares on Tuesdayes and Thursdayes, the Stage being made to take up and downe when they please” (from a 1631 edition of John Stow’s *Annales*, ed. Edmund. Howes (London: Printed by Richard Meighen, 1631), cited in C. W. W. Wallace, ‘The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1597–1603’, *University of Nebraska Studies*, 8 (1908), 103–321, 147.)

traitors displayed above London Bridge – up to thirty-five at a time, parboiled and dipped in tar as a preservative. Not only were these grisly relics considered “a major tourist attraction” in and of themselves,⁷ but their position above the only bridge into the city also meant that the heads greeted all citizens returning from theatres along the South Bank.

The Tower of London also cast a long shadow over theatre during the period, and gave rise to a number of dramatic works which Kristen Deiter terms “*Tower plays*”.⁸ Deiter reads the Tower as a cultural artefact, “a dramatic emblem”⁹ which occupied an important place in London’s self-representation, as evidenced by its appearance in some twenty-four history plays in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. These plays, including Thomas Legge’s *Richardus Tertius* (1579), all three parts of Shakespeare’s *King Henry the Sixth* (1590-1) as well as *Richard III* (1592), Dekker and Webster’s *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (1602), and John Ford’s *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck, A Strange Truth* (c.1625-34), were written by playwrights who had personally witnessed executions at Tower Hill, and feature execution scenes which respond to the experience of those spectacles. For Deiter, empathy was the defining factor in whether or not the spectators enjoyed public executions, with reactions varying depending on the condemned. The execution of a Catholic, for example, may not have caused revulsion, whereas if the spectators identified the condemned as “one of us”,¹⁰ the execution could be seen as a more personal, and therefore brutal, act.

⁷ Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York: Norton, 2004), 172-3.

⁸ Kristen Deiter, *The Tower of London in English Renaissance Drama: Icon of Opposition* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984) 101; see also Karen Cunningham, “Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death”, *PMLA*, 105/2 (1990), 209-22, 211.

Similarly then, Deiter posits that these Tower plays “privileged the *victims*’ viewpoints, uniting audiences in compassion for them”.¹¹

As Deiter’s conclusions suggest, the relationship between theatre and public executions depends less on the relationship between the locations in and on which these events took place, and more on their power as highly visible public performances. Foucault famously outlined the innate theatricality of public execution in his influential *Discipline and Punish*, in which he described the rites of capital punishment as nothing less than a “theatre of punishment” where the state tries to inscribe its power on the body of the felon along with a public admission of guilt and repentance.¹² It was of central importance to the process that punishment was “public” in its visibility and ritualised demonstrativeness. It was not enough that punishment was inflicted upon the victim by the sovereign, Foucault tells us: the power of public torture and execution depends upon the punishment being “spectacular” in the root meaning of the word, requiring an audience to witness the display: “it must be seen by all almost as its triumph”.¹³ Although Foucault’s focus is primarily on the eighteenth century, his conclusions are equally applicable to early modern England, in which the connection between public executions and theatre, and indeed the notion of capital punishment as inherently theatrical, was firmly rooted in contemporary culture.

In Tudor and Stuart executions, the scaffold was a stage of public spectacle upon which were performed an established sequence of rituals designed to assert and strengthen the monarch’s power over subjects’ bodies

¹¹ Deiter, *The Tower*, 214.

¹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 116.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

and discourage criminal activity by spectators.¹⁴ The figures on the scaffold were the principal players in performances of ritualised violence which were made readily available to the public – around 6,160 convicts were hanged at the notorious Tyburn gallows during Elizabeth’s reign alone.¹⁵ Indeed, the public actively sought out the opportunity to witness these spectacles, and executions at prominent locations such as Tower Hill and Tyburn could draw spectators numbering in the thousands.¹⁶ Those members of the audience in possession of disposable income could, if they so desired, pay a small fee for a better view in a seat or private room overlooking the events.¹⁷ The willingness of people to pay good money to witness executions in the same way that they might pay for entry into any one of London’s theatres or bear-baiting arenas not only suggests that the two forms of spectacle shared a common audience,¹⁸ but also implies a deeper parallel between the styles of entertainment that audiences could expect to take in at these events. Like a stage play, every aspect of the judicial process was carefully stage-managed, “from the construction of death penalty charges, to trial records, to the spectacles’ locations, to the final words and actions of the condemned”.¹⁹

¹⁴ See Cunningham, “Renaissance Execution”, 209-10. See also Gillian Murray Kendall, “Introduction”, in *Shakespearean Power and Punishment: A Volume of Essays* (London: Associated University Presses, 1998) 8-9; and J.A. Sharpe, “‘Last Dying Speeches’: Religion, Ideology, and Public Executions in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Past and Present*, 107 (May 1985), 144-167, 161-66.

¹⁵ This is a figure which actually represents a significant decrease from the 72,000 souls put to death under Henry VIII (Deiter, *The Tower*, 122).

¹⁶ John Laurence, *A History of Capital Punishment, with Special Reference to Capital Punishment in Great Britain* (London: Sampson, 1932) 8; For the beheadings of Anne Boleyn’s fellow accused on Tower Hill in 1536, the scaffold was “built especially high, to give a good view to the vast crowds who were certain to turn up” (David Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 580-1). And for the execution of Northumberland and others in 1554, over ten thousand spectators gathered on Tower Hill (Hester W. Chapman, *Lady Jane Grey: October 1537-February 1554* (London: Cape, 1962), 169).

¹⁷ Smith, “The Theater and the Scaffold”, 218.

¹⁸ Höfele, *Stage, Stake and Scaffold*, 2 and *passim*.

¹⁹ See Cunningham, “Renaissance Execution”, 210-11; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, “Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England”, *Past and Present*, 153 (November 1996), 73-4.

Each performance followed a distinct and recognised pattern regardless of the crime for which the victim had been found guilty. Comparing political trials for treason with local punishments of suspected witches, Susan Dwyer Amussen notes that in all cases “punishments were public; spectacle was central to punishment”.²⁰ Under these conditions, the figures involved in the spectacle on the elevated scaffold – executioners, clerics and criminals all – and the citizens congregated around the stage “were profoundly aware of their public function” as performer and audience respectively.²¹ Those functions were, we might imagine, acutely significant to the condemned in the moments immediately prior to their execution. Certainly, Mary Queen of Scots had the theatre in mind as she heard the hammering of the carpenters erecting the scaffold on which she was to die: “I think”, she wrote in a letter to the Spanish ambassador, “they are making a scaffold to make me play the last scene of the Tragedy”.²²

As Mary’s words demonstrate, the similarities between stage and scaffold presented a “powerful matrix for semiotic exchanges”.²³ And nowhere was the transfer of powerfully affective images and meanings more evident or more powerfully embodied than in the last dying speech of the condemned in their final moments on the scaffold. To J.A. Sharpe, the victims of public execution are “the willing central participants in a theatre of punishment, which offered not merely a spectacle, but also a reinforcement of certain values”.²⁴ The values in question were, ostensibly at least, those of the state. The last

²⁰ Susan Dwyer Amussen, “Punishment, Discipline, and Power: The Social Meanings of Violence in Early Modern England”, *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), 1-34.

²¹ Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare’s Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 13.

²² Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (10th edn., London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 521.

²³ Höfele, *Stage, Stake and Scaffold*, 12.

²⁴ J. A. Sharpe, “‘Last Dying Speeches’: Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Past and Present*, 107 (May, 1985), 144-167, 156.

speech of the condemned provided an opportunity for the felon to express true repentance for their sins (sins not limited to the offence for which they had been condemned, but also for a whole litany of wrongdoings throughout their lives to that point), and their performance of penitence would help simultaneously to deter others from committing similar acts and also help assert “the legitimacy of the power which had brought them to their sad end”.²⁵

In this chapter I explore the ways in which the dramatic action of both John Webster’s *The White Devil* (1612) and Thomas Middleton’s *The Maiden’s Tragedy* (1611)²⁶ are informed by certain conventions of that uniquely performative approach to death, the public execution – particularly the dying speech, an imaginative exploration of living death in which the speaker simultaneously communicates with the living whilst facing death – two examples of which are demonstrated by Anne Boleyn and James French above. As might be expected from works in the revenge tragedy genre, dead and dying bodies occupy prominent positions in both plays, and there are similarities between the ways that those bodies are treated in each tragedy. Both works, for example, are named after their central female characters, Vittoria and the Lady respectively, whose deaths mark significant turning-points in the narrative of each play. Both also feature as antagonists corrupt civic authorities who are preoccupied with – indeed, fetishise – death. The villainous Duke Bracciano in

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ In this thesis I refer to the play as *The Maiden’s Tragedy* so as to remain consistent with my primary source for the text, the 1998 edition which appears in *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*, edited by Martin Wiggins. As Julia Briggs explains in her introduction to the most recent edition of the play, however, the play’s actual title remains a controversial issue. The play had not been given a name when it was submitted to Sir George Buc, the Master of the Revels, in 1611. When Buc licensed the play manuscript in 1611, he thus referred to it as “This second Mayden’s tragedy”, presumably inspired by its thematic similarities to a play that Buc had come across the previous year, *The Maid’s Tragedy*, by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. For this reason, as well as the fact that the word “maiden” does not appear in the play itself, some modern editors prefer to term the play *The Lady’s Tragedy*. See Briggs, Introduction to Thomas Middleton, *The Lady’s Tragedy: Parallel Texts*, ed. Julia Briggs, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2010 [first published 2007]), 833-838., 833.

The White Devil considers the spectacle of execution (including the cold-blooded murder of his wife Isabella) to be an “Excellent” evening’s entertainment (2.2.24), while his accomplice Flamineo gleefully stages his own death and descent into hell (“Oh, I smell soot, / Most stinking soot!” [5.6.143-4]) before mocking the attackers who believed his ruse (5.6.150-152). The necrophiliac Tyrant of *The Maiden’s Tragedy*, meanwhile, takes fetishisation of death to a horrifying extreme when he takes the Lady’s corpse for his mistress, removing her from her tomb so that he might “clasp the body for the spirit that dwelt in ‘t” (4.4.112). In addition, both tragedies have in common scenes involving ghostly visitations, suicides and the manipulation of corpses.

The connection between these tragedies which most interests me, however, and that which draws particular significance from the cultural trope of the last dying speech, is the central conflict which they share and which ultimately forms the basis of all dramatic tension in both plays: the conflict between *subjective* dying bodies and *objectified* dead ones. To state that the dead body loses its self-control – loses, in fact, the ability to self-represent – seems a truth so self-evident that it hardly bears mentioning. And yet, I argue, it is a truth which takes on an entirely new significance for the individual faced with death. “For those of us studying death and the dead body”, writes Sarah Tarlow, “The bodies we study are no longer subjects. The dead do not experience the world as embodied selves; instead they are the objects of others’ interpretation”.²⁷ While Tarlow refers to the mindset of modern archaeologists who unearth corpses, I argue that the tradition of the last dying speech, as evidenced in both public executions and the dramatised deaths in *The White Devil* and *The Maiden’s Tragedy*, suggests that the distinction which

²⁷ Sarah Tarlow *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 8.

Tarlow strikes between the places of living and dead bodies in discourse is equally pertinent, if not more so, to those who are on the cusp of becoming dead bodies themselves. As I will discuss, dying words, such as Boleyn's and French's are testament to the importance of anticipating the place which one may come to occupy in public memory and discussion after one's death.

The quotations from Boleyn and James French at the start of this chapter neatly exemplify the powerful opportunity which last dying speeches present – even if, at first glance Boleyn, the most famous of Henry VIII's six wives, and French, a double murderer in twentieth-century Oklahoma, appear to have little in common. They were convicted of very different crimes, the methods by which they were executed – beheading and electrocution respectively – were different, and their deaths have been remembered in entirely different ways. Today, Boleyn remains perhaps the most frequently-discussed and debated figure of the English Renaissance behind Shakespeare himself, and her execution marks either the final moment of a heretical "temptress", or the creation of a Protestant martyr "comforter and aider of all the professors of Christ's gospel" depending on which source one consults.²⁸ French, on the other hand, is known primarily for his final one-liner.

Dig a little deeper, however, and some similarities emerge between the approaches to imminent death on display in Boleyn's and French's respective dying speeches. For one thing, neither talks about the past. Neither uses their last words to address their crimes directly, to explicitly admit guilt or protest innocence. As a matter of fact, one might read in both speeches a measure of subversive defiance. Boleyn's insistence that she will neither "accuse" nor

²⁸ Nicholas Sander, *The rise and growth of the Anglican schism* (1585), ed. D. Lewis (London: Burnes & Oates, 1877); John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, ed. J. Pratt, 8 vols. (London: 1877), v: 60.

speak anything "against wherof I am accused and condempned to dye" belies the fact that she is clearly thinking about those things, and her pointed disregard implies paradoxically that there is reason to accuse her accusers and doubt the veracity of her alleged crimes, thereby "leaving open the question of her innocence".²⁹ Similarly, French does not dwell on the nature of his crimes, choosing instead to make a joke which acknowledges the reality of his death sentence – that he will 'fry' – but which is entirely devoid of any punitive context. By disassociating his crime from his punishment, French achieves the same effect as Boleyn of subtly undermining his punishment. Unlike Boleyn's sober dismissal of the facts, however, French uses gallows humour to surmount, as Wylie Sypher might put it, the evil of his situation.³⁰

The examples of Boleyn and French demonstrate the powerful opportunity afforded to condemned individuals to influence their discursive – and in the case of Boleyn, eternal – futures with their last dying speeches – an opportunity that involves not only self-representation but, to borrow a term coined by Greenblatt, "self-fashioning".³¹ Greenblatt uses the concept of "self-fashioning" to describe the "crafting of a public role" by an individual.³² To self-fashion signifies a willingness to transform one's identity, "if only for a brief period and with mental reservations, into another", and project that fashioned self onto the wider world.³³ When this willingness takes the form of improvisational role-playing that results in the exploitative transformation of another person's reality – a kind of ownership that conceals itself – it can

²⁹ Greg Walker, "Rethinking the Fall of Anne Boleyn", *The Historical Journal*, 45/1 (March 2002), 1-29, 9. See also Ives, 'Faction at the court of Henry VIII: the fall of Anne Boleyn,' *History*, 57 (1972): 169-88, 171-2.

³⁰ Wylie Sypher, ed., *Comedy: "An Essay on Comedy" by George Meredith. "Laughter" by Henri Bergson* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 1980), 246.

³¹ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: UCP, 1980), 2.

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 228.

paradoxically involve “self-cancellation”, a profound desire to escape from the identity so crafted”.³⁴ The notion of self-fashioning is, as Greenblatt discusses, particularly useful in discussions of self-representation in Renaissance literature due to what appears to be “an increased self-consciousness” in the sixteenth century “about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process”.³⁵ One may detect in the last words of Boleyn and French the same kind of manipulation of public identity that Greenblatt observes in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1589) when Spenser writes that the general intention and meaning that he has “fashioned” is “to fashion a gentleman”.³⁶ In each case the speaker alludes to the performativity of selfhood: Boleyn fashions herself as an image of stoic virtue; French projects humour; Spenser proposes to compose a “gentleman” in the same way that one might compose a book of poetry.

Although the performance of self occurs at the level of the individual, self-fashioning, like the final performance of a condemned man or woman at a public execution, is ultimately instigated by external forces, and depends on the interplay between the condemned and his or her environment. According to Greenblatt, self-fashioning occurs as reaction rather than action, as a response to “some experience of threat, some effacement or undermining, some loss of self”.³⁷ The process is fluid, and as one’s circumstances change, one’s identity may be fashioned and re-fashioned accordingly. It is therefore apt to consider the moments prior to death in terms of their scope for role-playing. Certainly, there are few greater threats to the self – and thus few greater provokers of self-

³⁴ Ibid. 13.

³⁵ Ibid., 2.

³⁶ Ibid., quoting: Edmund Spenser, “A Letter of the Authors Expounding His Whole Intention in the Course of this Worke”, *Faerie Queene*, in *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1932-57).

³⁷ Ibid., 9.

fashioning – than the prospect of imminent death. Greenblatt suggests as much in his discussion of the life and death of Thomas More. It is only prior to More's execution, we are told, that he seems to resolve his identity issues connected to contemporary religious upheaval, which found their clearest expression in *Utopia* (1516).³⁸ Faced with his demise, More brings together the opposing aspects of his identity which previously caused consternation, and which “triumph and are destroyed together on a scaffold”.³⁹ Drawing on Greenblatt's assertions concerning More, Claire Joanne Huxham argues that the “moment of death, and the period of reflection immediately before, allows subjects to construct themselves in a way of their own choosing, fashioning not only their identity, but the final moment in a life's performance”.⁴⁰

If Boleyn and French are not concerned with the past, it is because they are instead focused on the future. For French, this is simply a focus on his place in the living world after death and the level of control which he might exert over it. For Boleyn, this proves a tricky balancing act of her posthumous role in the living world, and readying herself for the immediacy of her entry into heaven or hell. Indeed, Boleyn's final words to her audience are a call to prayers, followed by a quiet commendation of her soul to God.⁴¹ Although the religious connotations of speeches by executed men and women in general are certainly of relevance to this discussion, I suggest that one's spiritual fate is but a part of a broader posthumous future envisioned by the condemned in their dying speeches – a post-execution future which takes part in both the realm of the dead and the discourse of the living.

³⁸ Ibid., 68-9.

³⁹ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁰ Claire Joanne Huxham, “‘Married to Death and Silence’: Gender, Death and Uncanny Readings on the Early Modern Stage”, PhD thesis, University of Exeter, UK, 2009, 54.

⁴¹ Anne's very last recorded words, according to Hall, were entirely concerned with her spiritual fate, and spoken quietly as she knelt blindfolded: “To Jesus Christ I commend my soul; Lord Jesu receive my soul” (Hall, *The union*, sig. PPP6r).

Indeed, both Boleyn and French use their dying speeches to anticipate and participate in a discursive future beyond their deaths. In Boleyn's case, she refers not only to the "lawe" by which she is "judged to die", but also to "any persone" who might "medle of my cause", and requires them to "judge the best" as well. Apparently confident that her trial and execution will find narrative currency long after she is dead, Boleyn imagines that people (and it is unclear whether she has anybody specifically in mind) will "medle" – actively involve themselves – in her story, interpreting the circumstances surrounding her death and judging as they see "best". And as her subversive refusal to address those circumstances suggests, the conclusions which her biographers see "best" may not tally with the official judgement of the law. In essence, Boleyn imagines her death as the subject of discourse, and endeavours to influence that discourse as best she can in the moments which precede her execution. French goes one step further, actually imagining himself as a headline, a text to be interpreted: "French Fries". Like Boleyn, he acknowledges – even hopes – that people will discuss him after he is dead, and stakes an immediate claim in that discussion by ensuring that his final words are an ultimate act of self-identification, defining the terms by which he is remembered before the newspapers can do it for him. Removed from any reference to his crimes, culpability or frame of mind, French resists any definition based solely on the circumstances of his condemnation and instead positions himself as, like Boleyn's "cause", open to a multitude of interpretations.

However, to focus on this "final moment" of selfhood and the "destruction" of self in death comes at the expense of considering what happens to the fashioned self *after* death. I suggest that the type of self-fashioning found in last dying speeches of executed individuals such as Boleyn

and French goes beyond the constantly shifting role-playing of action and reaction which Greenblatt describes, and involves an anticipatory element which has thus far been largely overlooked in scholarly discussion. A notable exception is Roberta Barker's study of the performance and anticipation of death in the *Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*,⁴² where she contends that performing a death allowed the actor to live on beyond his on-stage "death" through the audience's discussions about the performance beyond the theatre. For Barker, this exchange between the actor and audience originating in the actor's on-stage final speech mirrors the interplay between convict and spectators at the execution scaffold: "[T]he exchange between a dying person and those who live on after his or her death may be the social transaction that most closely approximates the impact of a powerful actor's performance on the spectators who leave the theatre after the last words have been spoken"⁴³. Finally, however, while the actor or the convict may affect audience's or spectators' discourse about their death on stage or scaffold through the delivery of their final speech, Barker contests that it is the audience or spectators who dictate how they are remembered: "In the theatre as in the death-chamber or at the scaffold, only the reactions of individual spectators can determine the ultimate success or failure of the performance".⁴⁴

While Barker's study does consider the anticipatory element of the final speech, for Barker, the actor or convict on the stage or scaffold, while attempting to self-fashion their roles and hence stake claim to their own subjectivity, is actually objectified by the audience or spectators throughout the final dying speech. However, I argue that the dying speech was used by the

⁴² Roberta Barker, "'Another Voyage': Death as Social Performance in the Major Tragedies of John Webster", *Early Theatre*, 8/2 (2005), 35-56.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 51.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

condemned as a way of extending their subjectivity beyond their own deaths, as they pre-empt and attempt to combat their own posthumous objectification, a stance that has not thus far been adopted.

Condemned individuals on the scaffold (or in French's case, the electric chair) demonstrate an innate understanding of the transition that all those who die must undergo – a transformation not simply from living to dead, but from subjective, self-representing individual to objectified subject of outside interpretation. This shift begins the very instant that the individual ceases to represent him or herself. The 'posthumous executions' which I mentioned in the previous chapter are proof enough that freshly dead bodies were often tools of officially-sanctioned justice, fashioned in gruesome ways in the interests of sending a message to the public, but the objectification of the executed did not end there. One recent critic postulates that Boleyn, who tucked her dress underneath her feet as she knelt on the scaffold, might have done so solely to prevent her sexual objectification in the moments immediately following the executioner's stroke:

Boleyn's body would have flailed wildly as it bled profusely, permitting those men who stood closest to the body to have a look under her skirts, or perhaps at other parts of her body, such as her bosom. With Boleyn's head gone, she would have been unable to react of protest either physically or vocally.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Thea Cervone, "Tucked Beneath Her Arm": Culture, Ideology, and Fantasy in the Curious Legend of Anne Boleyn", in Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey eds., *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in the Medieval and Early Modern Imagination* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 289-310, 298.

The implication is that those present understood that it might have been possible to view Boleyn in a most private, even voyeuristic manner when she was no longer able to defend herself. The fate of her headless corpse has also been re-imagined by the public as one of England's most enduring ghost stories. To this day tales persist of Boleyn's ghost, carrying her head under her arm, being spotted in the grounds of the Tower and at her ancestral homes of Blickling Hall and Hever Castle. Suggestions as to what her ghost might signify vary: is her head presented as a gruesome gift, to mark her as seductress? Does she cradle it maternally in a reference to the daughter from whom she was separated? Does she clutch it possessively, in defiance of the accusations levelled against her?⁴⁶ Although the treatment of Boleyn as a ghost might be considered less morally problematic than the potential treatment of her bleeding corpse as a sexual object, both scenarios involve the viewer re-presenting someone no longer able to represent themselves, in a manner both coldly impersonal and worryingly intimate.

Faced with the alarming reality of posthumous objectification, the condemned may, like Boleyn and French, attempt in their last dying speeches to perpetuate their fashioned selves or otherwise exert control over their social roles even after death. The same might be said, of course, of the last words of those who die under different circumstances, and one may read the same type of self-fashioning at work in both Aire's farewell prior to his execution in Thomas Heywood's *The Second Part of King Edward the Fourth* (1600) and the final utterances of Prince Hamlet and Othello before their deaths by poison and suicide respectively. The luckless Aire, unjustly convicted of "treasons" by Richard III, uses his last dying speech to distance himself from the stigma of his

⁴⁶ Ibid., 289-90.

condemnation, instead re-framing his death as the willing payment of “rent” to his beloved “landladie”, Jane Shore.⁴⁷ Similarly, Hamlet insists that Horatio remain behind to tell the truth of his “story” lest “a wounded name – / Things standing thus unknown – shall live behind me” (5.2.297, 292-3). Othello is equally aware of his posthumous future as discourse, and like French uses his final words to try to shape it, pleading those present to

in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am: nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well
(*Othello*, 5.2.383-7).

Indeed, examples abound throughout early modern drama of characters whose last dying speeches demonstrate self-fashioning in anticipation of their posthumous objectification, regardless of the circumstances of their deaths. And yet these speeches all owe something to the conventions of contemporary public executions - particularly that of the last dying speech – which emphasised the contrast between self-representation and objectification in a manner more explicit than might be found anywhere else in the period.

Both *The White Devil* and *The Maiden's Tragedy* derive drama from, and emphasise throughout, the same distinction between self-fashioning of dying individuals and re-interpretation of the dead by the living. At several points in Webster's tragedy living characters impose narratives upon the dead, manipulating the corpses of characters like Bracciano and Camillo to suit various agendas. Elsewhere, we see dying characters such as Marcellus and Vittoria use their dying words to define themselves and their deaths on their

⁴⁷ Thomas Heywood, *The first and second partes of King Edward the Fourth* (London: By Felix Kingston for Humfrey Lownes and John Oxenbridge, 1600), sigs. L3r; L5v.

own terms, to “welcome death / As princes do some great ambassadors” (5.6.221-2), as Vittoria puts it. Each time, however, attempts on the part of the dying to exert a measure of control over their deaths are matched by the machinations of the living, who re-interpret or re-fashion their deaths – generally in ways that are at odds with the intentions of the last dying speeches. Similarly, the central dramatic conceit of *The Maiden’s Tragedy* is built around the living Tyrant repurposing the dead Lady, taking her corpse for his lover in direct opposition to her dying wish.

In addition to the drama of living death which arises from the Tyrant’s obsession with the Lady, the play also features a sub-plot revolving around Anselmus and his unfaithful Wife, which explores similar themes and culminates in a bloody confusion of dead bodies and misinterpretations. I suggest that this secondary storyline, generally paid little attention by critics, nevertheless complements the primary plot by emphasising the ways in which subjective wishes of the dying might clash with the external objectification by the living. Both of these plays, in short, present audiences with living characters who attempt to assert control over death – be it their own or that of someone else. Wherever death is anticipated, presented or re-purposed, however, it rarely marks the end of the matter. In *The White Devil* and *The Maiden’s Tragedy*, as on the gallows dotted around early modern London, one’s death rarely remains one’s own for long; as I will discuss, once dead, the corpse becomes an open signifier, ripe for re-interpretation and re-fashioning.

“In a mist”: Death and Self-Fashioning in *The White Devil*

Very little is as it seems when it comes to the identities and motivations of the central characters in Webster’s “first great tragedy”.¹ Deceit and moral confusion lie at the very heart of *The White Devil* – a play named, as Peter Murray points out, after a common Protestant phrase signifying “a devil disguised by a fair outside, a vice pretending to be a virtue”.² Although the inherent contradiction of the play’s title means that most modern audiences can likely infer its meaning, the term “white devil” has lost some of its original sense of spiritual horror over the years. To Martin Luther, writing at the inception of the Protestant Church, a “white Devill” is that which “forceth men to commit spirituall sinnes, that they may sell them for righteousness”, and is thus more dangerous than the “blacke devill, which onely enforceth them to commit fleshly sinnes which the world acknowledgeth to be sinnes”.³ To refer to a “white devil”, therefore, was to invoke ideas not only of deceit or deception but of moral decay disguised as virtue, which bleeds undetected into the world and actively corrupts those around it. From the name of the tragedy alone, then, Webster’s audience could expect to see “intimations of guilt or virtue ... deprived of any outward tokens or moral criteria which might validate them”.⁴ While the title is usually taken to refer specifically to the charismatic adulteress Vittoria Corombona around whom the plot revolves, “*The White Devil*” also connotes an

¹ Charles R. Forker, *Skull Beneath the Skin: The Achievement of John Webster* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 254.

² Peter B. Murray, *A Study of John Webster* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 32.

³ Martin Luther, *A commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians first collected and gathered word by word out of his preaching, and now out of Latine faithfully translated into English for the unlearned. Wherein is set forth most excellently the glorious riches of Gods grace* (London: By Thomas Vautroullier, 1575), sig. C5.

⁴ Marcus Nordlund, *The Dark Lantern: A Historical Study of Sight in Shakespeare, Webster, and Middleton* (Michigan: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1999), 367.

entire dramatic world of dangerous duality which collapses notions of “good” and “evil”.⁵

The White Devil is not the only play from this period to explore the notion of a world which defies easy interpretation, a world in which, as the malcontent courtier Flamineo explains, “She hath no faults who hath the art to hide them” (5.6.248). The play echoes at various points both *Hamlet*’s Elsinore, where “something [...] rotten in the state” (1.4.90) lies hidden in plain sight, and *Macbeth*’s Dunsinane, where “there’s no art / To find the mind’s construction in the face” (1.4.12-3) and a murderer might “look like th’innocent flower, / but be the serpent underneath” (1.5.63-4). Indeed, Webster’s own *The Duchess of Malfi*, written soon after *The White Devil*, depicts a landscape of such moral uncertainty that there is “no more credit to be given to th’ face / Than to a sick man’s urine” (1.1.238-9). Few other dramatic works, however, present such an unrelenting preoccupation with the paradoxical duality of morality and identity suggested by the play’s title⁶ – the “relation between fair show and foul truth”, as Hereward T. Price puts it.⁷ This preoccupation finds expression in a host of characters whose behaviour makes it a struggle to tell good from evil – including the two figures involved in the primary romantic plot of the tragedy. Duke Bracciano might have his wife and his lover’s husband killed brutally to free himself for marriage to Vittoria, Price argues, but the “love” shared by the pair, despite being “a source of so much evil and suffering” nevertheless remains “a thing of strength and beauty”.⁸ David Coleman notes that the lack of clarity presented by characters in *The White Devil* has caused confusion over

⁵ Robert F. Whitman, “The Moral Paradox of Webster’s Tragedy”, *PMLA*, 90/5 (October 1975), 894-903, 897.

⁶ Susan H. McLeod argues that duality itself might be considered Webster’s “master-motive”, one which compensates for the absence of other unifying themes, in “Duality in *The White Devil*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 20/2 (Spring, 1980), 271-285, 272 and *passim*.

⁷ Hereward T. Price, “The Function of Imagery in Webster”, *PMLA*, 70/4 (1955), 717-39.

⁸ *Ibid.*

its very genre: “the clarity of a clearly defined revenger, exacting revenge on a clearly defined opponent, is simply not present in Webster’s play, which offers a series of revenges, and little sense of a clearly defined avenging hero with whom the audience can identify”.⁹ For this reason critics such as Elizabeth Williamson prefer to circumvent identifying the play with a particular genre, speaking instead of the “elements of revenge tragedy” present in the play.¹⁰

In the moral chaos that results from the lack of any “positive ethic”,¹¹ moral certitude is replaced by an intense individualism that, if not necessarily the “feverish and ghastly turmoil of a nest of maggots” described by Rupert Brooke,¹² sees the power dynamic of the play hinge on control over the fashioned self. When traditional institutions of moral guidance such as the “Court, courtly love, the processes of law, the Church, the moral imperatives of kinship have all been degraded”, argues Clive Hart, characters opt to survive by finding “strengths and positive values” within themselves.¹³ These “positive” values are, however, usually relative – as, indeed, are the roles which these values prompt characters to play at any given time relative to their audience. Flamineo, for example, desires only to “grow great” at any costs, and in order to do so he will happily vary his “shapes” depending on his audience (4.2.248, 247), assuming roles such as knave and madman, cold-blooded murderer, and pander to his sister. Elsewhere we see Camillo, having denied Vittoria the pleasure of his marital bed, proudly liken himself to a “silkworm” which “useth to fast every third day, and the next following spins the better” (1.2.179-80).

⁹ David Coleman, *John Webster: Renaissance Dramatist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 65.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Williamson, “The Domestication of Religious Objects in *The White Devil*”, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 47 (2007), 473-90.

¹¹ Travis Bogard, *The Tragic Satire of John Webster* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955) 118, 131.

¹² Rupert Brooke, *John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama* (New York: John Lane, 1916), 161-2.

¹³ Clive Hart, ed., *The White Devil* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), 2-3.

Flamineo, however, turns Camillo's self-fashioning against him, using Camillo's abstinence as an opportunity for Vittoria to spend the night with Bracciano:

"Thou entanglest thyself / in thine own work, like a silkworm", he revels in an aside (1.2.196-7). The frequent shifting of social roles throughout the play prompts Jonathan Dollimore to opine that in no other play "is the identity of the individual shown to depend so much on social interaction",¹⁴ a view echoed by Coleman, who suggests that Webster's "aesthetic relativism" comes close to suggesting one of the insights developed by late-twentieth-century theorists of identity: "that 'the self' is often constituted through the act of performance. The performance of social interaction *constructs*, rather than *reveals*, the self".¹⁵

Given that self-fashioning is so often associated with or used to enable immoral behaviour in the tragedy, the term "white devil" might be applied not only to the *femme fatale* Vittoria, but also to any of a range of characters who, at various points during the play, deceive others through performance in order to mask their true selves.

Instead of emphasising the strength of subjective will, then, the prevalent self-fashioning of Webster's characters contributes to the general sense of disorder created by the lack of a unifying moral structure by presenting identity as something perpetually transient rather than fixed. This is borne out by the fact that the central characters of the play – Flamineo, Bracciano and Vittoria – only come close to realising their "true" selves when on the verge of death. In these moments we are, as Goldberg explains, made to sympathise with those individuals whose passions and aspirations force them to defy this repressive, obfuscating environment, but also "made to see that their defiance can only end

¹⁴ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (3rd edn, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 231.

¹⁵ Coleman, *John Webster*, 37.

in their own destruction”.¹⁶ This, however, raises some interesting questions concerning the last moments of the dying and the attitude towards the dead during the play. Given the belief at the time Webster was writing that the words of dying men should, as Henry Goodcole puts it, “imitate that which was good, and to eschew evill”,¹⁷ what moral clarity might be presented by the deaths of characters in a play in which “no one is thoroughly evil” but instead contains aspects of both virtue and villainy?¹⁸ What truth-value might we place on the last dying speeches and actions of complex and multifaceted characters who, in the words of Othello, “turn, and turn, [...] / And turn again” (4.1.253-4)? If, as Michael Neill states, deaths in tragedies were depicted in ways which transformed the act of dying, through performance, into a supreme demonstration of distinction,¹⁹ how might we interpret scenes of dying and death in *The White Devil*? To what extent do the dying moments of characters serve to illuminate selfhood in a play wholly bent upon destabilising notions of fixed identity and populated by a host of white devils for whom death is simply part of an ongoing social performance?

In recent years, criticism of *The White Devil* has focused more and more on the impact of death upon characters in the play, and ways that the performance of death – in terms of both the narrative and the tragedy as a piece of theatre – might comment on particular conflicts in Webster’s society. Thomas Rist, for example, posits that the reactions of individuals to their own deaths and those of others constitutes a complex navigation between Catholic

¹⁶ Dena Goldberg, *Between Worlds: A Study of the Plays of John Webster* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1987), 9.

¹⁷ Henry Goodcole, *The true declaration of the happy conversion, contrition, and Christian preparation of Francis Robinson, gentleman Who for counterfetting the great seale of England, was drawen, hang'd, and quartered at Charing-Crosse, on Friday last, being the thirteenth day of November* (London, 1618), sig.A4r.

¹⁸ Price, “The Function of Imagery”, 729.

¹⁹ Michael Neill, *Issues of Death* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 32.

tradition and Reformist doctrine, observing that much of the Christian symbolism throughout the play is “resonant” with Catholic significance.²⁰ Fiona Martin likewise sees last dying speeches in plays such as *The White Devil* as ways of confronting various philosophies of death, and the innate fear of death which permeates so much of Webster’s – and our own – society. As we respond to the characters’ last spoken words, and watch them enact the moment of passing, “we do so”, Martin tells us, “in the midst of our own fears of death, our own wishes to deny our mortality”. These moments compel audiences to decide, “between Death and dying speaker, who has had the last word”.²¹ Roberta Barker takes a metatheatrical slant, arguing that the drive to self-fashion epitomised in the final scene of Flamineo’s faking his own death before being killed emphasises the illusory nature of death in the theatre. According to Barker, the lives of ambitious shape-shifters such as Flamineo and Vittoria reflect early modern culture’s contradictory views of performance – its “attraction to performance as an aid to social advancement and its mistrust of performance as a dangerous lie”. By overtly acknowledging the impossibility of representing death onstage, “Webster’s depiction of their deaths not only accepts the limitations of performance, but also raises the question of its potential”.²² The shared theme of these readings – and which has as much in common with the very public dying speeches of condemned men and women in Webster’s England as it does with the intimate and personal uncertainties of theatregoers in post-Reformation England – is a conflict between the individual

²⁰ Thomas Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). This monograph builds on related ideas discussed in his earlier essay, “Religion, Politics, Revenge: The Dead in Renaissance Drama”, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 9/1 (May 2003), 1-20.

²¹ Fiona Martin, “‘Morbidity Exhilarations’: Dying Words In Early Modern English Drama”, PhD thesis, University of Waikato, New Zealand, 2010, 300.

²² Roberta Barker, “‘Another Voyage’: Death as a Social Performance in the Major Tragedies of John Webster”, *Early Theatre*, 8/2 (2005), 35-56: 36.

and society. On the one hand, we see that the act of dying emphasises subjectivity and the opportunity for the individual to engage in definitive self-fashioning; on the other hand, death negates that possibility by leaving the individual at the mercy of outside forces of objectification and re-interpretation. In what follows, I build upon existing critical discussions by arguing that the reactions *to* death and the actions of various characters *in* death in *The White Devil* both comment on the convoluted moral structure of the tragedy while also illuminating the persistent struggle between the self and the other. As A.J. Smith has observed, self-fashioning in *The White Devil* is a self-perpetuating tragedy of identity:²³ all characters desire to self-realise, but none can do so without inevitably colliding with the emergent wills of others. Death in Webster's tragedy is the final such collision of identity and dramatises both attempts by characters to negotiate death through self-fashioning, and also the struggle between the individual and others who attempt to curtail the subjectivity of the dying, or re-fashion the bodies of the dead. Although Webster's narrative revolves around characters who adopt disguises, shift social roles and have new identities forced upon them depending on their circumstances, three scenes in particular bring issues of death and identity to the fore: the Conjuror scene (2.2), in which Bracciano observes the murders of Isabella and Camillo; Bracciano's deathbed scene (5.3.1-181), which inverts traditional Christian deathbed rituals; and the very final scene (5.6), which presents the struggle of Flamineo and Vittoria to self-fashion when confronted with the "destruction of stable worldly identities".²⁴ In what follows I analyse the complex representations of identity in these scenes, and demonstrate how their differing representations of the conflict

²³ A J Smith, "The Power Of The White Devil" in *John Webster*, ed. Brian Morris (London: Ernest Benn, 1970), 69-91.

²⁴ Barker, "Another Voyage", 50.

between the self and the other creates an atmosphere in which the possibility for self-fashioning through dying is matched only by the potential for re-fashioning by outside forces. Instead of clarity in death, Webster leaves his audience, as Flamineo puts it, “in a mist” (5.6.261).

The most powerful instances of identity-fashioning in *The White Devil* involve, or are set against backdrops of, death and dying. Webster’s dialogue is rich with references to the gallows and execution that demonstrate characters’ grim awareness of the potential of death as a discursive battleground, wherein the subjective will clashes with objectification by others. Lodovico, who has been banished from Rome for abusing his power with prodigality and “certain murders” (1.1.31), extolls public executions as powerful opportunities for condemned individuals to control their own public image by manipulating their final moments:

I have seen some ready to be executed
Give pleasant looks and money, and grown familiar
With the knave hangman. So do I, I thank them,
And would account them nobly merciful
Would they dispatch me quickly (1.1.53-58).

Lodovico, however, is denied this idealised opportunity to self-fashion on the gallows, and is used instead by the Italian court as a living “example” to “better these bad times” through a manipulative “gentle penance” which he does not understand or appreciate (1.1.37, 36). While Lodovico objects to the appropriation of his living body, the dying Zanche alludes to the re-fashioning of her corpse. Referring to the consumption of blood to cure epilepsy, a common practice that was still being recommended by English physicians in 1747,²⁵ she asks her assailant if he “wilt drink some? / Tis good for the falling sickness”

²⁵ Karen Gordon-Grube “Anthropophagy in Post-Renaissance Europe. The Tradition of Medicinal Cannibalism”, *American Anthropologist*, 90/2 (1988), 405-9: 407.

(5.6.231). Her words are a mockery; she turns the notion of objectification into a joke before concluding with an affirmation of selfhood in which her dark skin becomes a metaphor for the resilience of her identity. “I am proud / Death can never alter my complexion”, she states, “For I shall never look pale” (5.6.231-3).

The conflict between self-fashioning and processes of objectification is a central theme of Vittoria’s arraignment for Camillo’s murder. Cardinal Monticelso refers to the grisly spectacle of the public anatomy when he compares Vittoria to “dead bodies which are begged at gallows / And wrought upon by surgeons to teach man / Wherein he is imperfect” (3.2.97, 98-100). Ironically, however, this image of objectification – of teaching a moral lesson through deliberate and disgraceful exposure of the individual²⁶ – only draws attention to what Christina Luckyj observes as the contradiction underlying Monticelso’s rhetoric: what he seeks to prove by *sight* during the arraignment can never be *seen* and must always therefore be subject to doubt, his words depending not only on the stability of outward signs but also on their utter deceptiveness”.²⁷ His words echo Isabella’s earlier imagined dissection of Vittoria, in which, Schwyzer observes, “all the individuating physical features” are “brutally excised”.²⁸

To dig the strumpets eyes out,
... cut off
Her nose and lips, pull out her rotten teeth,
Preserve her flesh like mummia (2.1.247-50).

²⁶ Neill points out that dissection was performed upon the corpses of criminals to ensure the humiliation of the malefactor beyond execution and enhance moral lessons of the whole theatre of punishment (*Issues*, 118). The most comprehensive recent study of public anatomies in recent years is Richard Sugg’s *Murder After Death: Literature and Anatomy in Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

²⁷ Christina Luckyj, “Gender, Rhetoric, and Performance in John Webster’s *The White Devil*”, in *Enacting Gender on the Renaissance Stage*, eds. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 219-232: 225-6

²⁸ Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 76.

Ironically, the more layers she strips away from the white devil, the less and less clear the truth becomes. As Schwyzer points out, Isabella's "trophies" (2.1.250) lose their significance as she renders them to anonymous mumia, leaving behind a skull the likes of which Hamlet found in the graveyard and imagined any number of possible lives for (5.1). Moreover, Isabella's words here are designed to obfuscate a more immediate truth, as Isabella says them as she "perform[s] this sad ensuing part" (2.1.226) of "foolish, mad, / And jealous woman" (2.1.265-6) in order to excuse Bracciano, who she still dotes on, for his separation from her. In both Isabella's dissection and Monticelso's mention of public anatomies, then, exposure hints at mystification rather than revelation of the truth.

Vittoria herself reiterates this paradox during her arraignment as she purposefully avoids exposure by hiding in plain sight. To Luckyj, Vittoria's triumph in this scene is in "challenging the misogynist notion that men can penetrate women scopically by splitting herself into subject and object: as, in act 1, where she is both controlling narrator and terrified victim of her own dream (1.2.230-48), in the trial scene she is both the detached observer who offers to "give aim" to guide her enemies' shots and the object of those shots, "at the[ir] mark" (3.2.24). This puts Vittoria, rather than the Cardinal, in control of the object of representation, herself".²⁹ It is Vittoria who rejects the lawyer's use of Latin, for example, on the grounds that "amongst this auditory / Which come to hear my cause, half or more / May be ignorant in't" (3.2.15-17) – a remark which, David Gunby points out, works as much to include the audience in the Red Bull theatre in the action as it does the ambassadors present at the trial.³⁰

²⁹ Luckyj, "Gender, Rhetoric and Performance", 226.

³⁰ John Webster, *The Works of John Webster*, ed. David Gunby et al, 3 vols (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), i, 72.

Significantly for a London audience, it is particularly “the English Ambassador’s comments” to which, “in their acuity and balance, we might be expected to subscribe”.³¹ And yet it is impossible for Webster’s audience to share fully the Ambassador’s even-handedness because we, unlike he and the other onstage witnesses, are distinctly, unavoidably aware of Vittoria’s guilt. Thus while Vittoria’s attitude during this trial appears to offer transparency in opposition to the opacity of the Cardinal’s attempts at presenting the truth, this transparency is an illusion; a performance by which Webster encourages us to admire Vittoria’s “brave spirit” (3.2.142) only two scenes after witnessing the horrific murders which she instigated. Seeming clarity and objectivity masks an underlying moral complexity of self-fashioning, and while Vittoria positions herself as a “fair and crystal river” (3.2.206), we may hear echoes of Suffolk’s words in *2 Henry VI* (1591): “Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep” (3.1.53).

In a landscape where issues of identity are so closely related to issues surrounding death, it is hardly surprising that characters in *The White Devil* so often concern themselves with how death and dying might be navigated by the individual. Tellingly, in both of the ghostly visitations that occur during the tragedy, the most significant questions asked by the living of the dead concern the transition from dying to dead. Francisco has the matter at the forefront of his mind as he directly addresses the spirit of Isabella for the first time: “How cam’st thou by thy death?” (4.1.107). On the surface it appears that Francisco is querying the manner by which his sister was murdered, and it is certainly possible that he seeks specific details, but what these details might be is a matter for speculation. In 5.3., Zanche reveals to him and Lodovico that Isabella

³¹ Ibid., 80.

“was empoisoned / By a ‘fumed picture; and Camillo’s neck / Was broke by damned Flamineo, the mischance / Laid on a vaulting horse” (5.3.246-51), to which Francisco responds, “Oh, strange discovery! Why till now we knew not / The circumstances of either of their deaths” (5.3.268-9). And yet there is no reason why either Francisco or Lodovico would be surprised by Zanche’s news: Francisco has already had Isabella’s death spelled out to him by Monticelso – “Your sister’s poisoned” (4.1.3) – and he knows that Bracciano was behind it (4.1.133). Lodovico, meanwhile, was present at Isabella’s death after she kissed the portrait of Bracciano. Those present seem to realise that the portrait was the means by which Isabella had been poisoned, as evidenced by Webster’s stage direction that Isabella “will not suffer them to go near it” (2.2.23 SD). Both Francisco and Lodovico are therefore clearly aware of both sets of “circumstances”, making the surprise they register at Zanche’s information contradictory. In narrative terms, then, there is little reason for Francisco to ask his sister’s ghost about the facts of her murder; he is already familiar with them. In fact, this may well be the reason for the ghost’s silence: if the apparition is indeed a projection of Francisco’s imagination, it could not possibly tell him anything that he does not already know.

It is tempting to consider Francisco’s seemingly unnecessary questioning as evidence of either carelessness on Webster’s part or an over-hasty re-writing prior to publication – with Webster perhaps feeling the need to spell things out to the reader after the absence of a “full and understanding auditory” at the play’s initial performance at the Red Bull theatre.³² Alternatively Francisco’s immediate dismissal of the question may be considered a precursor to what Rist labels the “rhetorical” and “psychological” questioning later in the passage by

³² “To the Reader”, *The White Devil*, 6.

which the character discounts “what he considers irrelevant thoughts”.³³ I suggest, however, that when Francisco asks the ghost “How” she came by her death, he is being literal: he wishes to know whether or not she died a “good” death. Read in this sense, his words anticipate his confusion over how he should commemorate Isabella’s death – with “tombs or death beds, funerals, or tears” or “revenge” (4.1.111). Preoccupied with remembering his sister, he wishes to know how she, in her dying moments, sought to be remembered.

Flamineo echoes Francisco’s question in his interaction with Bracciano’s ghost in the very next act, focusing on how the process of dying might be controlled. Specifically, Flamineo seeks to know how hermeneutical self-fashioning in one’s final moments might impact on one’s place in the afterlife: “In what place art thou?” he asks the apparition, “what religion’s best / For a man to die in?” (5.4.127; 129-30). As Rist observes, Flamineo’s language here and his references to “Our Italian churchmen” who “Make us believe dead men hold conference / With their familiars” (5.4.138-40) undoubtedly invites a comparison between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism as the alternative religions “best to die in”.³⁴ In addition to responding to contemporary religious debates regarding the place of ghosts in theology, however, Flamineo’s words are also suggestive of the potential for one to alter or take control of one’s spiritual fate before death by shifting religious identity.³⁵ To Flamineo, whose “fate” weighs heavily upon him (5.4.117), it is “most necessary” that he finds out from the ghost “how long I have to live” (5.4.32, 31) – and therefore how much longer he has left to settle upon the chosen identity which will define his afterlife.

³³ Rist, “Religion”, 4.

³⁴ Ibid., 15.

³⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the place of ghosts in early modern theological understanding, see Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

The difficulty of truly establishing one's identity in death is most conspicuously realised in scenes which depict the act of dying itself. The first of these – the murder of Isabella in the Conjuror scene at 2.2 – is a symbolic melting-pot in which the surface significations of the Duchess' death are subverted by additional layers of moral complexity, resulting in a display which, like Vittoria in the court-room, facilitates the audience's understanding even as it eludes it. This scene involves Duke Bracciano employing a Conjuror to present via his "strong-commanding art" of black magic visions of the murders of Isabella and Camillo (2.2.22). Despite being referred to as "Conjuror" in the play text, however, the character actually terms himself a "nigromancer" (2.2.8), referring specifically to the kinds of magic involving communication with and manipulation of the dead. By highlighting from the outset the conflict between the dying self and the objectification of the dead, Webster draws attention to the function of this scene as a nexus of the central interests of Webster's tragedy: not only does it present the first instances in *The White Devil* of death and dying in performance, but it also features overt dramatisations of death-oriented identity fashioning. Camillo's death is unequivocally "bad" by the standards of Webster's time, as the victim loses subjectivity in death once his corpse is refashioned by his killers. The vision of Isabella's death, meanwhile, appears to showcase symbolically the kind of powerful self-fashioning exercised by martyrs on the scaffold.³⁶ And yet although these visions appear to present the struggle between the self and the other in two markedly different ways, contrasting the notions of "bad" and "good" deaths so central to early modern conceptions of death and public executions, the dramatic style of Isabella's

³⁶ For a fuller understanding of early modern opinion about martyrs, see John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: Imprinted by Iohn Daye, dwelling over Aldersgate beneath S. Martins, 1583).

death and the allusions to idolatry which Webster incorporates into the scene repurpose and undercut those same distinctions.

Rather than simply having these deaths reported like the execution of the Thane of Cawdor in *Macbeth* or staged as a play-within-a-play like the myriad deaths in the final act of Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, Webster highlights the thematic significance of these murders by presenting them as dumb shows. The first of these depicts Isabella's death via a poisoned portrait of her husband:

Isabella kneels down as to prayers, then draws the curtain of the picture [of Bracciano], does three reverences to it, and kisses it thrice. She faints, and will not suffer them [Giovanni and Lodovico] to come near it; dies

(2.2.23 SD).

The second dumb show is a vision of Camillo's drunken, violent demise at the hands of Flamineo, where Camillo's corpse is subsequently repositioned to make his death look accidental.

Marcello and two more [Camillo's friends] whispered out of the room, while Flamineo and Camillo strip themselves into their shirts, as to vault. As Camillo is about to vault, Flamineo pitcheth him upon his neck, and, with the help of the rest, writhes his neck about, seems to see if it be broke, and lays him folded double as 'twere under the horse; makes show to call for help

(2.2.37 SD).

As the stage directions imply, these dumb shows present a clear shift in dramatic tone from the rest of the play, and would have had a considerable effect on the way that Webster's audience would have interpreted and understood Isabella's and Camillo's deaths. Dieter Mehl explains that dumb shows were distinguished by their lack of dialogue and designed to appeal to

the eye, utilizing magnificent costumes, props, and special effects.³⁷ According to Mehl, the Renaissance English audience desired the showy spectacle in all aspects of performance, secular, spiritual, and popular, with dumb shows being included in court masques, royal entries, city pageants, and Lord Mayors' shows.³⁸ In addition to the symbolic potency of gesture over dialogue, Katherine Carey, in her study of Webster's dumb shows, describes how this particular dramatic form offers an "aesthetic of ... hypermediacy", a term borrowed from modern media critics David Bolter and Richard Grusin and used to describe a "multiplicity which makes multiple acts of representation visible, reproducing what they call a 'rich sensorium of human experience'".³⁹ Theatregoers watching a Renaissance dumb show "watch the play performed within a frame; then, within that frame, they witness yet another play". Thus the dumb show "by its very nature", explains Carey, "builds layers of hypermediation into the performance".⁴⁰

In *The White Devil*, this hypermediacy allows the audience to see three stories at once, "watching both murders occur while at the same time observing Bracciano's reaction, two frames within one theatrical frame".⁴¹ The language used by the Conjuror emphasises the tremendous theatricality of these dumb show sequences: he seats Bracciano in the manner of one attending a play and invites the Duke to observe how the performances "grow to action" (2.2.4), accompanied by "music from this charmèd ground, / To yield, as fits the act, a tragic sound!" (2.2.36-7). The Conjuror's pointedly theatrical references, and the

³⁷ Dieter Mehl, *The Elizabethan Dumb Show: the history of a Dramatic Convention* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), xiii.

³⁸ Ibid., 7-9.

³⁹ Katherine M Carey, "The Aesthetics of Immediacy and Hypermediation: the Dumb Shows in Webster's *The White Devil*", *NTQ*, 23:1/89 (February 2007), 73-80: 73; also David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999), 33-4.

⁴⁰ Carey, "Aesthetics of Immediacy", 74.

⁴¹ Ibid.

heavily stylised format of the dumb shows themselves thereby grant audiences a very present reminder that the play is just a play, even as *at the same time* the silently mimed sequences paradoxically evoke an even greater visual horror which makes it impossible to alienate the audience from emotional response altogether. After all, asks Goldberg, “if the intention were merely to distance the murder of Isabella and Camillo, why not simply have the action reported?”⁴² Isabella’s death in particular confuses our moral equivalent of depth perception, as the overtly theatricalised dumb shows simultaneously distance us from the action and force us to become voyeurs to the intimate and highly eroticised death of a mother in front of her son. Our emotions towards the latter are cast into fresh light by the former, as we are invited to compare our reactions upon witnessing these deaths to those of Bracciano, with whom we are “complicit in this gross violation of privacy”.⁴³ As in the arraignment scene which it pre-empted, the suggestion of exposure is a facade: nowhere else in *The White Devil* are the inner workings of theatre laid so bare – yet that self-same clarity is integral to engaging the audience in the illusion. As the reviewer Matthew Gurewitsch writes of a 2001 Brooklyn Academy of Music production (dir. Gale Edwards) “[Bracciano’s] composure at the death of Isabella, poisoned as she kisses his portrait, especially chills the bones”.⁴⁴

The sequence of the dumb shows invites comparison between them, particularly in terms of the ways in which both victims are fashioned in their deaths. The most prominent difference between the two is the manner in which each murder is carried out, a difference which Mehl sees as central to shocking the audience: “Webster places the two dumbshows in a sequence whereby the

⁴² Dena Goldberg, “‘By Report’: The Spectator as V voyeur in Webster’s *The White Devil*”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 17/1 (1987), 67-84: 74.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Matthew Gurewitsch, ‘A Dark Fable Escapes Shakespeare’s Shadow’, review of John Webster, *The White Devil*, in *The New York Times*, (7 Jan 2001), <<http://tinyurl.com/qytjuyx>>.

second murder exceeds the first in sadistic cruelty”.⁴⁵ In terms of physical violence, Camillo’s fate is certainly more brutal than Isabella’s (although given Bracciano’s cold detachment upon witnessing the horrific death of his wife, I would hesitate to call the second vision crueller), perhaps in order to emphasise Camillo’s fate as a “bad death”. His murder occurs so quickly that the victim is not afforded any opportunity to confront death on his own terms or seek spiritual atonement; like Old Hamlet, Camillo is cut off even in the “blossoms of [his] sin, / Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled” (1.5.81-2), leaving his killers to determine what the death will signify. For Old Hamlet, his own brother successfully reframed a regicide as a snake bite; in Camillo’s case his corpse becomes a mere cog in Flamineo’s sinister “engine” (3.1.46), as the crime scene becomes the site of a debauched accident. Having been denied the opportunity to fashion himself in death, Camillo’s corpse is re-fashioned by Flamineo – becoming an “improper property”, to use Pascale Aebischer’s term⁴⁶ – demonstrating the ease with which the dead might themselves be controlled and manipulated by the living. Here, manipulation of the corpse is tantamount to manipulating Camillo’s social identity: as Forker writes, “by pitching Camillo ‘upon his neck’ when he leaps over ‘a vaulting horse’ (2.2.37 SD) – a form of exercise often facetiously associated with sexual conquest” Flamineo constructs Camillo as the very “parody of sexual desire” which Camillo, in the opening act of the play, feared becoming.⁴⁷ The appropriation of Camillo’s corpse anticipates Flamineo’s flippant remark to another dead figure later in the play – this time the ghost of Bracciano himself: “What a mockery death hath made of thee!” (5.4.126).

⁴⁵ Mehl, *Elizabethan Dumb Show*, 24.

⁴⁶ Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare’s Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 83.

⁴⁷ Forker, *Skull Beneath the Skin*, 70. Forker observes that jokes about vaulting and vaulting horses were common in the drama of the day.

In contrast to Camillo's objectification and "bad" death, by the standards of Webster's day Isabella dies what might be considered a "good" death – one in which her actions prior to death and behaviour while dying appear virtuous and she has opportunity enough to fashion herself in her final moments in such a way as to garner the empathy of Webster's audience, if not that of her husband. On the surface, Isabella retains her dignity magnificently in death. By endeavouring to protect Giovanni and Lodovico even in the throes of death, she cements herself as the domestic martyr which she had begun to fashion herself as in the previous scene – one whose selfless endurance of "the killing griefs which dare not speak" is perfectly suited to the mute theatricality of a dumb show (2.1.279). This, certainly, is how she tends to be treated in modern productions such as that directed by Claude Chagrin in 1969, in which, Ralph Berry comments, Isabella was no less than "a saint-like figure" whose devotion to her "personal God, the same God who turns out to be her killer" only accentuates her innocence and the tragedy of her death.⁴⁸ Her absolute commitment to her husband and to the domestic ideal is certainly the cause of her "pathetic vulnerability",⁴⁹ but her womanly virtue is also the means by which she exerts some level of control over her death.

It is not, however, as straightforward as it first appears to distinguish Isabella's demise as a "good death" and victory for self-fashioning. Although Webster presents via the two murders a contrast between "good" and "bad" deaths – between the clarity of self-fashioning and the loss of identity through objectification – the context surrounding and symbolism within Isabella's dumb show also collapses those very distinctions. The first dumb show is introduced,

⁴⁸ Ralph Berry, "Masques and Dumb Shows in Webster's Plays", in G. R. Hibbard, ed., *The Elizabethan Theatre VII: Papers Given at the Seventh International Conference on Elizabethan Theatre Held at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, in July 1977* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books in collaboration with University of Waterloo, 1980), 124-46, 126.

⁴⁹ Goldberg, "By Report," 74.

after all, by the Conjuror, who promises to “show you by my strong-commanding art / The circumstance that breaks your duchess’ heart” (2.2.22-3), creating the impression that Isabella’s and Camillo’s fates have been predetermined. Like Flamineo’s explicit stage-managing of Camillo’s corpse, the Conjuror’s words frame Isabella’s death as part of a much grander “tragic” act in which she does not exert control in her death but control is exerted over her by others. Isabella’s final moments, these words suggest, demonstrate only the illusion of subjective control, a pale imitation of triumphant self-fashioning – where the identity which Isabella shapes for herself proves to be as ephemeral and ambiguous as the “sophistic tricks” disparaged by the Conjuror (2.2.7). Read in these terms, Isabella’s lack of speech no longer strikes one as a powerful statement of endurance and self-control. Instead, it represents her discursive captivity as “a mute emblem of frustration”,⁵⁰ whose all-important last dying words are denied an audience.

While audiences might thus question the extent to which Isabella’s death scene commemorates her individual will, to post-Reformation theatregoers the more troubling aspect of the scene may well have been the “reverences” which she pays to Bracciano’s portrait – a nightly “custom” (2.2.25), according to the Conjuror, suggestive of nothing so much as dangerous idolatry. The place of portraiture in Protestant theology was a contentious issue in Webster’s England, as the Reformist iconoclasm cast deep suspicion on the power of images, if not art *per se*. David Freedberg observes of contemporary discourse that if the powers of art “are too troubling, they are the powers of *images*, not of art”.⁵¹ The human image, Marguerite Tassi explains, came to be regarded as a

⁵⁰ Forker, *Skull Beneath the Skin*, 270.

⁵¹ David Freedberg, *Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 388.

likeness that had the dangerous potential to be mistaken for a presence, particularly the image of the face, which could provoke strong emotional and erotic responses.⁵² Portraiture, therefore, “could be seen to hold spiritual dangers” that erred “on the wrong side of idolatry”.⁵³ Numerous examples from early modern English drama suggest that, despite the reformers’ iconoclastic teachings, “people retained some vestige of Catholic belief in the liveliness of portraits and continued to treat them in ways that might be construed as dangerously close to idolatry”.⁵⁴ In the theatre – itself a theologically problematic visual art – stage portraits were used most often in an erotic context: just as the recusant Catholic might revere saints’ relics or the real presence of Christ in the Communion host, the stage lover treats the painting as “a surrogate that possesses the beloved’s qualities”, betraying excessive devotion not unlike idolatry.⁵⁵ The character of Julia, for example, in Shakespeare’s *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (c.1591), treats eroticism and heresy in the context of portraiture as so closely related as to be indistinguishable from one another: tasked with delivering a portrait of Silvia to Proteus, she describes how it will “be worshipped, kissed, loved and adored” in senseless “idolatry” (4.4.183, 184).

As it pertains to *The White Devil*, Webster undermines the seemingly virtuous aspects of Isabella’s death by directing his audience’s focus to the questionable moral connotations of her idolatrous behaviour towards Bracciano’s portrait. The Conjuror alludes to the dangerous eroticism of the portrait when he describes how Isabella feeds “her eyes and lips / On the dead

⁵² Marguerite A. Tassi, *The Scandal of images: Iconoclasm, Eroticism, and Painting in Early Modern English Drama* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 24-5.

⁵³ Margaret Aston, “Gods, Saints, and Reformers: Portraiture and Protestant England”, in Lucy Gent, ed., *Albion’s Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 186-8: 186.

⁵⁴ Tassi, *The Scandal of images*, 67.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

shadow" (2.2.27-8). "[S]hadow" – a term also used by Shakespeare's Julia (4.4.181) – here emphasises the inducement to unholy worship presented by the painting, while the eroticism of the moment at which Isabella claims from the portrait the very kiss that she so fervently desires from her husband in the flesh (2.1.158) would almost certainly have been exaggerated through the medium of the dumb show. Most telling, perhaps, is the detail of Isabella keeping the portrait of Bracciano curtained, marking it as something kept for private consumption. During the Renaissance, concealment was a hallmark of erotic art, which was generally kept – among the upper classes in particular – as "a secret": in the words of Nicholas Hilliard in his limning treatise, "a man may use it, and scarcely be perceived of his own folk".⁵⁶ Although one should be careful not to exaggerate the Protestant phobia for such artworks – even Queen Elizabeth is known to have kept a private cabinet full of "divers little pictures wrapt within paper" among which was a portrait of the Earl of Leicester, labelled "my Lord's picture"⁵⁷ – the fact that such images were often designed to be kept secret is testament to the stigma attached to such art. Protestant distrust extended to the painters of erotic art, who were commonly thought to be unscrupulous and associated with immoral practices such as poisoning.⁵⁸ *The White Devil*, like the anonymous 1592 tragedy *Arden of Feversham* (in which a "cunning" painter is described who can "temper poyson with his oyle")⁵⁹ draws on this cultural paranoia in the characters of Julio and Christophero, who infect the portrait of Bracciano "with an oil / And other poisoned stuff" (2.2.29-30).

Webster's dumb show thus presents audiences with a twofold condemnation

⁵⁶ Nicholas Hilliard, *A treatise concerning the arte of limning* (Ashington: Mid Northumberland Arts Group, 1992), 43.

⁵⁷ Sir James Melville, *Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill, 1535-1617*, ed. A Francis Steuart (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1930), 94.

⁵⁸ Tassi, *The Scandal of images*, 130.

⁵⁹ Anon., *The lamentable and true tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham* (London: By E. Alde, 1592), sig. Br.

both of immoral erotic paintings and of idolatry. The perils of ritualistically feasting one's "eyes and lips" on false idols, a phrase which positions Isabella's actions as a debasement of Roman Catholic beliefs in the power of images and the transubstantiated Holy Communion, are borne out by the fact that kissing the poisoned portrait results directly in Isabella's death. To a post-Reformation audience, then, Isabella's murder, while brutal, is also a consequence of her own immoral behaviour, something irreconcilable with the notion of her as a virtuous domestic martyr.

If the competing significations surrounding Isabella's death force readers to consider the possibility of a foul truth behind the fair show of Isabella's final moments, this uncertainty is compounded by her appearance as a ghost to Francisco in 4.1, a scene which casts further doubt over her identity in terms of her spiritual and discursive afterlives. The scene occurs shortly after Monticelso suggests that the "Blessed lady" is "now above thy woes" (3.2.324-5), a suggestion that situates her subsequent return firmly amid theological debates of Webster's day and creates an immediate confusion of identity. Generally speaking, to present a ghost in early modern drama under any circumstances was to court a certain amount of religious controversy, regardless of the context of the play, given that in post-Reformation England reverence towards the spirits of the dead was seen as an exclusively Catholic preoccupation and anything resembling a ghost was in fact a devil in disguise.⁶⁰ Francisco's reaction to his revenant sister reflects the conventional post-Reformation attitude towards ghosts as he explains away the ghost's presence as a hallucination: "Thought, as a subtle juggler", he admonishes himself, "makes us deem / Things supernatural, which have cause / Common as sickness"

⁶⁰ I discuss more fully the theological significations of ghosts in early modern drama – including Isabella's – in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

(4.1.104-6). Webster's presentation of the interaction between Francisco and the apparition has led some critics to feel certain of the apparition's origins in the scene, as opposed to the ambiguity which traditionally accompanies stage ghosts. Goldberg argues that Webster "causes the audience to identify its own spectator role with the spectator role played by the actor on stage", in that we are confronted with the theatrical staging of something that is visible only to Francisco and are therefore inclined to side with his view.⁶¹ Moreover, as Marcus Nordlund asserts, the apparition is visible to Francisco only when he has closed his eyes at 4.1.97 and "fenced off an inward reality whose images are purely illusory – and hence more reliable – than the ambiguous world of white devils, ghosts, and opaque appearances".⁶² To Nordlund, the "certitude" of Isabella's apparition being mere "melancholic thought" (4.1.98) makes it "substantially different from other Websterian visitations"⁶³ which, like that of the semi-sentient echo in the *Duchess of Malfi* lack definitive clarification, or that of Bracciano later in *The White Devil*, a spectre which Flamineo claims is "beyond melancholy" (5.4.143).

And yet however much we are invited to identify with Flamineo's scepticism, the presence of the apparition nevertheless insinuates a range of contentious possibilities – particularly as there is no other character on stage to either lend credence to Francisco's words or to verify the ghost's real presence. As Rist suggests, Francisco's dismissal of Isabella's ghost, for all that he dismisses the visitation as a trick of the mind, only highlights the impossibility of determining with any certainty the true nature of her apparition and therefore

⁶¹ Goldberg, *Between Worlds*, 72.

⁶² Nordlund, *The Dark Lantern*, 373-4

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 374.

her identity.⁶⁴ The implication that Isabella's ghost may indeed be a Catholic revenant would in turn suggest that, far from the heavenly reward that Monticelso imagines for Isabella, she suffers in Purgatory – a fate which would mark her death, for all its apparent innocence, as theologically “bad” as that suffered by Camillo. Clear parallels between Francisco in this scene and Isabella in her bedchamber, both of whom “feed” upon different kinds of “dead shadow”, compound the impression that Isabella might be more of a genuine presence than Francisco's philosophy accounts for. Despite his insistence that the ghost stems from “Imagination” (4.1.100), he is not immune to the allure of the image, and slips briefly into a distinctly Catholic reverence for the dead, asking her “How cam'st thou by thy death?” His intimate encounter with his dead sister leaves him in a state of emotional confusion that reflects the multifaceted significations of the ghost:

What have I to do
With tombs or death beds, funerals, or tears,
That have to meditate upon revenge? (4.2.110-112)

Francisco is quick to banish Isabella from the scene (and play) once and for all in terms which recall Isabella's loss of subjective control in her death: “Remove this object; / Out of my brain with't!” (4.1.109-110). Even as his language reinforces the conventionally Protestant view, however, the incentive for vengeance which the vision provides Francisco is rooted in pseudo-recusancy. As Lee Bliss notes, the scene works as both a parody of earlier revenge tragedy and an inversion of the traditional Catholic position on ghosts in which the apparition generally “demands revenge from a surprised and baffled

⁶⁴ Rist, “Religion”, 12.

relative” rather than the other way around.⁶⁵ Regardless of whether the apparition is indicative of Isabella’s spiritual or commemorative afterlife, then, Webster creates the same disconcerting confusion in his depiction of Isabella’s ghost as he does with the scene of her murder, and in doing so emphasises Isabella’s tragic loss of self in death.

If Webster’s presentation of Isabella undermines notions of the “good” death by placing it in a morally questionable context and denying Isabella both speech and the opportunity for clarity of selfhood both before and after dying, Bracciano’s murder inverts the “good” death paradigm altogether in order to demonstrate how easily one’s dying moments might be controlled and refashioned by others. From the very moment of Bracciano’s poisoning, Webster highlights the dangerous malleability of social identity. One of Bracciano’s physicians, for example, is branded a “most corrupted politic hangman” for being unable to cure the poisoned Duke (5.3.21), while in the same scene Bracciano’s hapless armorer receives an even worse lot: in his sole on-stage act in the entire play, he is brought before Bracciano only to be immediately (and incorrectly) identified as a traitor and removed from the scene before he has a chance to speak for himself or address the attack on his character (5.3.6). Intriguingly, depending on the length of time it takes for Flameneo to “remove the bar” of Bracciano’s poisoned helmet, ascertain the “unfortunate revels” and summon medical assistance, there may well have been enough time between the poor armorer being dragged off and the physicians being rushed on for the two characters to have been played by the same actor. Any such role-doubling, if any occurred at all, would not only have injected some welcome dark humour into the tragedy, but also have visually

⁶⁵ Lee Bliss, *The World’s Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), 119.

emphasised the general mystification of identity in both the scene and wider play.

As Rist and Susan McLeod have already observed, Webster frames this scene – which sees the poisoned Bracciano presented on his deathbed – as an explicit “savage parody” of Catholic ritual.⁶⁶ The ritual in question is the *Commendatio Animae* or “Recommendation of a Departing Soul”, traditionally a ceremony designed to promote a “good” death by ensuring that the final thoughts of the dying were holy, but one which is transformed in *The White Devil* as part of Francisco’s vengeance upon the Duke. This is not the first such parody in *The White Devil*. As David Coleman observes, Bracciano’s death occurs at the hands of poisoners who have taken “the sacrament to prosecute / Th’intended murder” (4.3.73-4), referring to the act of swearing on the consecrated bread of the Eucharist; clearly, swearing to perform a murder is “a violation of the spiritual significance of the Catholic ritual ... presenting Catholicism as an exotic and corrupt form of religious practice”.⁶⁷ To a Protestant audience, then, this act is doubly problematic: not only does this act invoke the Catholic Communion which Protestantism railed against, but forces onto it a rhetoric of vengeance incompatible with the purposes of the ritual. Webster repeats this disconcerting juxtaposition of Catholic ritual and immoral vengeance at Bracciano’s deathbed in much greater detail. As with the Roman Eucharist, McLeod informs us, Webster’s Protestant audience would have been familiar with the elements of the *Commendatio* which the playwright inverts.⁶⁸ Bracciano’s killers, Lodovico and Gasparo, attend his deathbed disguised “in the habit of Capuchins”, parodying the role traditionally assigned to priests and

⁶⁶ Susan H. McLeod, *Dramatic Imagery in the Plays of John Webster* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1977), 69; McLeod, “The *Commendatio Animae* and Bracciano’s Death Scene in Webster’s *The White Devil*”, *AN&Q*, 14 (December 1975), 50-2; Rist, *Revenge Tragedy*, 128.

⁶⁷ Coleman, *John Webster*, 48.

⁶⁸ McLeod, “*Commendatio Animae*”, 50.

bystanders who would have prayed antiphonally for the dying (5.3.132 SD); the “crucifix and a hallowed candle” upon which Bracciano “firmly ... doth fix his eye” are proffered by the very men engineering his demise (5.3.132 SD; 5.3.134); the faux-monks usher Vittoria and Flamineo from the room, denying them the active participation in the process that would usually be expected of friends and relatives of the dying.

These inversions of a pre-Reformation ritual carry what a Protestant audience might have considered to be somewhat contentious theological connotations. After all, Rist observes, by using “*deviation* from the rite to imply ‘disorder’” Webster thus “associated the Catholic rite with order”.⁶⁹ In broadly moralistic terms, however, there is a symbolic elegance to Francisco’s vengeance which even a strictly Protestant audience might have appreciated. Not only does the poisoned Bracciano suffer the same fate as Isabella, but in a deeply ironic twist his disguised enemies are the ones who utter his Latinate last rites. Their disingenuousness makes a mockery of the ostensibly meaningful *Commendatio* ritual, undermining Bracciano’s death in precisely the same way that Bracciano undermined that of his wife in her final moments. On this occasion, it is Bracciano’s death that proves “Excellent” entertainment to Lodovico and Gasparo.

Webster’s dark rendition of the *Commendatio* shifts from parody to cruel inversion when Lodovico and Gasparo reveal themselves and their vengeful purpose to Bracciano and, like Alexander Iden attacking Jack Cade’s corpse, attack their victim – this time verbally rather than physically – with the clear aim of sending him to hell. As Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce have explained, it was a commonly-held belief in the late-medieval and early modern periods that

⁶⁹ Rist, *Revenge Tragedy*, 128.

“a man’s mental state at the moment of death condemned or saved him” in the afterlife.⁷⁰ The *Commendatio* ritual was a product of this belief, requiring the priest overseeing the ceremony to whisper the following aspirations to Christ into the dying individual’s ears as death drew near, thus directing their final thoughts – and therefore their soul – to salvation.

Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. O Lord, Jesus Christ, receive my soul ... O Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, shield me from the enemy, and receive me at the hour of my death... Jesus, Mary, Joseph – with you in peace will I sleep and take my rest.⁷¹

In their guise as monks, however, Lodovico and Gasparo turn the power of this ritual to determine a person’s afterlife to ill effect, and the “private meditations” (5.3.152) which they whisper into Bracciano’s ears are the antithesis of those suggested by the *Commendatio*:

LODOVICO Devil Bracciano! Thou art damned.
GASPARO Perpetually
LODOVICO A slave condemned and given up to the gallows
Is thy great lord and master.
GASPARO True, for thou
Art given up to the devil.
(5.3.154, 156-7)

These words are not chosen simply to offend their victim. Instead, as the repetition of “devil” implies, these words come from the same place as the Ghost of Vaughan’s “despair and die” directed at Richard III (5.3.151), spoken for the sole purpose of directing Bracciano’s soul to damnation.

Although there are instances in other dramatic works from the period in which characters assume or otherwise acknowledge control over the spiritual

⁷⁰ Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce “The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20/2 (Summer, 1989), 259-275: 260.

⁷¹ Quoted in McLeod, *Dramatic Imagery*, 66.

fate of another, Bracciano's death bed scene is perhaps one of the most provocative explorations of living death in all of early modern drama. Like Hamlet's refusal to murder Claudius while the latter is vulnerable in prayer ("am I then revenged", the prince asks, "To take him in the purging of his soul, / when he is fit and seasoned for his passage? No" [3.4.87-90]), Bracciano's fate in *The White Devil* demonstrates an awareness of how religious ritual might alter the desired effect of revenge, and therefore influence the ways in which that vengeance is ultimately enacted. Unlike *Hamlet*, however, the revengers in *The White Devil* turn the notion of "The Final Moment" to their advantage, and in doing so purposefully extend their reach beyond the world of the living. They manipulate and re-fashion Bracciano's mental state at the moment of his death in order to enact a final, lasting vengeance upon his very soul. To Francisco, who masterminded the plot, the malevolent re-fashioning of Bracciano's final moments was the most important element of the revenge plot. "What", he asks Lodovico, "did you terrify him at the last gasp?" (5.3.215).

As with many revenge tragedies, though, the efficacy – in both moral and practical senses – of vengeance is left ultimately unclear. Bracciano's dying moment is not, after all, spent with the curses of Lodovico and Gasparo weighing on his soul, but rather with the name of his lover upon his tongue. In yet another inversion of the *Commendatio*, which called for the dying person to say "Jesu, Jesu, Jesu" at the moment of expiration, Bracciano – either self-consciously or in a fit of delirium – calls not upon his saviour, but "upon the woman who has brought about his damnation"⁷²: "Vittoria! Vittoria!" (5.3.171) The ambiguity of these last dying words epitomises both the complete absence of moral clarity in the scene and also the wider conflict between the self and the

⁷² McLeod, *Dramatic Imagery*, 284.

other throughout the play. On the one hand, and as McLeod writes, Bracciano's final utterances as idolatry and further may be construed as evidence of Webster parodying the rubrics of the rite of commendation. He is, after all, in his final moments calling upon the white *devil*, the very person who symbolises his sinfulness and deviation from the path of virtue, and in doing so he presents a prototypical "bad" death. Yet on the other hand, if the ritual inversion hinges upon Lodovico and Gasparo fashioning Bracciano's thoughts to suit their own ends, Bracciano's dying outburst – an outburst that, crucially, comes as a response to Lodovico's threat that Bracciano will "be forgotten by thy funeral sermon" (5.3.170) – flies in the face of what his murderers seek to achieve. The name that the dying man cries out may not be that of the Redeemer, but in calling out Vittoria's name he actively resists the bastardisation of the ritual and manipulation of his spirit. To Price, Bracciano's final cry "transcends his crimes and brings salvation upon himself" as a testament to his true love for Vittoria – a transfiguration which, Price observes, is repeated in Vittoria soon after when, on learning of Bracciano's death, she exclaims, "O me! This place is hell!" (5.3.181).⁷³ As Lodovico exclaims, Bracciano appears to have "Come to himself again!" (5.3.172). The deathbed revenge plot, then, whether intended by Webster as an open parody of Catholic ritual, or as a deeper study of the encroachment upon the afterlife by the living, is an inversion which itself is inverted in its final moments. Lodovico is painfully aware of the fact: they badgered their victim "so idly", he complains, "that the Duke had like / T'have terrified us" (5.3.216-7).

Despite Bracciano's dying burst of subjectivity, however, his speech, fittingly, is curtailed by those who wish to speak for him: "You would prate, sir",

⁷³ Price, "The Function of Imagery", 191.

mocks Lodovico, before strangling the Duke with a tourniquet, and the appearance of Bracciano's ghost in the following scene suggests that the plot to fashion his afterlife was a success. As with the apparition of Isabella in 4.1, much uncertainty stems from the presence of a ghost *per se*, but while Isabella's ghost is implied to be an imaginative construct of "melancholy" (4.1.106), the Duke's spectre, Flamineo tells us, is "beyond melancholy" (5.4.143) – an evocative phrase which may indicate Flamineo's descent into madness but which seems to suggest that the ghost of Bracciano is somehow more present, more real, and more Purgatorial than that of Isabella.

In his discussion of the 'ghosts' of *The White Devil*, Martin Wiggins discusses the ghost in theatrical terms, designating them as those living characters who are marked as present on stage, but given no lines to speak. Many editors consider the inclusion of these characters to be an oversight on the part of the writer or printer, and so remove them from modern stage directions; but, as Wiggins argues, "characters may be eloquent merely by their silent presence on stage".⁷⁴ Although Wiggins does not discuss ghosts of the supernatural persuasion, implicit in his reading of *The White Devil* is a sense that "the physical impact of the play on a theatre audience is very different to the experience of a reader of the text", whether in the seventeenth century or today.⁷⁵ As it pertains to Bracciano's ghost, then, although as Rist points out there would have been very little difference between the "visible 'proof'" of the apparitions [of Bracciano and Isabella] as on-stage presences,⁷⁶ the Duke's ghost is certainly the more palpable and enduring of the two. In contrast to the meeting between Francisco and his dead sister, not only is there explicit

⁷⁴ Martin Wiggins, "Conjuring the Ghosts of *The White Devil*", *The Review of English Studies*, 48 (1997), 448-70: 453.

⁷⁵ Coleman, *John Webster*, 68-9.

⁷⁶ Rist, "Religion", 5.

physical interaction between Flamineo and the apparition, who “throws earth over” Flamineo from a “pot of lily flowers with a skull in’t” (5.6. 135 SD; 124 SD), but given that the dirt would surely have remained on stage after the apparition departs, that physicality extends into the following scene. Francisco may step in the earth as he swears to keep alive Lodovico’s name “in the ashes” (5.5.11).

Further indication that Bracciano’s ghost is a genuine revenant may be found in Flamineo’s claim in an earlier scene that “if prayers or oaths / Will get to th’speech of him, though forty devils / Wait on him in his livery of flames, / I’ll speak to him” (5.3.210-13), words which seem to deliberately echo those of Hamlet, and suggest that Bracciano’s ghost has been summoned through traditional Catholic methods. It is thus striking that when Flamineo confronts the ghost he, like Hamlet contrasting the “spirit of health” with the “goblin damned”, offers only two options as to its origins, omitting any reference to Purgatory: “In what place art thou?” he asks the apparition, “In yon starry gallery, / Or in the cursèd dungeon?” (5.4.127-8). And yet the absence of Purgatory from his musings recreates the same dichotomy that defined Bracciano’s death – the commendation to Heaven inverted as a condemnation to Hell. Flamineo’s question appears to be rhetorical; he provides the answer before he even asks it, and in doing so highlights the effectiveness of Lodovico’s and Gasparo’s revenge: “What a mockery death hath made of thee! Thou look’st sad” (5.4.126). Underscoring the notion of his demise as an exploration of living death, the appearance of Bracciano’s ghost demonstrates that even though the Duke’s dying act was to resist, his afterlife was ultimately fashioned – and left to be interpreted – according to the will of others.

Webster's exploration of the final moments before death, which begins in the death scene of Isabella (who is treated as a voiceless and multivalent signifier) and is developed in that of Bracciano (who speaks only briefly and is unable to effectively control his demise), reaches its zenith in the climactic scene of *The White Devil*. In this scene, Webster depicts a sequence of dying performances in which both the living and the dying meditate openly on the conflict between the self and others, between subjective self-fashioning *in* death and objectification and re-fashioning *of* death. In particular, the deaths of Flamineo (who "dies" twice – once in pretence and once in earnest) and Vittoria establish the world of the play as one in which "unstable identities are grounded in ceaseless social exchange", as Barker contends.⁷⁷ The ceaseless social exchange in question is not only one of personal identity and fashioned selves, but of power in death. Flamineo's false death is a bold assertion of selfhood masquerading as conventional penitence, while his and Vittoria's subsequent "real" deaths hint at true penitence but nevertheless evoke the "bad" deaths seen on public gallows as they refuse to conform to the expectations of their audience-executioners.

No character in Webster's tragedy participates in voluntary and self-conscious self-fashioning to a greater extent than his primary antagonist Flamineo, who "clings to survival and the hope of social advancement by putting on a number of antic dispositions".⁷⁸ Flamineo, Coleman writes, "is a notoriously unreliable speaker, shifting his opinions depending on his audience, and conscious of his role-playing throughout; he is, as many of the characters in the play are, constantly shifting between performed roles",⁷⁹ roles which include

⁷⁷ Barker, "Another Voyage", 36.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁹ Coleman, *John Webster*, 37.

willing pander to his sister (1.2.4-7), a “politic madman” (3.2.313) and suicidal nihilist (5.6.45-149). Flamineo’s predilection for deceit and the appropriation of different identities culminates in a false death that sees the duplicitous courtier seem to suffer an all-encompassing loss of control over his personal and social identities that in actual fact subverts an attempt by outside forces to seize control over the self. Disenfranchised in the wake of Bracciano’s murder, he forms a suicide pact with Vittoria and Zanche in order that they might all make a defining statement of self-empowerment: “My life hath done service to other men”, he claims, “My death shall serve mine own turn” (5.6.52-3). There is, in Flamineo’s deception, a shred of truth that might have seemed particularly pronounced to Webster’s audience, as Goldberg points out. His apparent despair certainly has a basis in the morally turbulent world of the play, and “If Flamineo’s death speech refers again to the corruptive powers of great men, it is because Flamineo has moments when he is objective enough to see that injustice leads to moral degeneration, his own included”.⁸⁰ Unbeknownst to him, however, his accomplices intend to “Let him die first” and save themselves (5.6.76). Under the pretence of complying with Flamineo’s plan, the women relieve him of his guns and allow him a final speech in which he claims to “know not” of his spiritual fate “Nor greatly care” (5.6.116-7). They then promptly shoot him, and stamp on his body. The ensuing death scene, Barker writes, “has all the trappings of a stage villain’s final reckoning”⁸¹ as Flamineo is caught “In [his] own engine”, as Vittoria puts it (5.6.126). Her words strike at the truth in more ways than one. Literally, Flamineo is “hoist[ed] with his own petard” (*Hamlet*, 3.4.207), allowing his munitions to be taken from him only then to be shot with them. More figuratively, not only is the trickster tricked himself, but his death

⁸⁰ Goldberg, *Between Worlds*, 50.

⁸¹ Barker, “Another Voyage”, 35.

also sees him switch from having engineered and disguised Camillo's murder and having benefited from the re-fashioned murder of Marcello, to being the victim of such a plot, being tricked into his own death and re-fashioned by his killers. Indeed, after he claims that "My death shall serve mine own turn" (5.6.52-3), he is shot to suit his sister's "turn" instead.

As Flamineo's words here suggest, the language of objectification of the dead surrounds the suicide complot, reminding the audience at every turn of the various earthly and spiritual debasements to which an individual may succumb after death. Flamineo's motivation for suicide stems from the fact that he does not wish to die at the "bidding" of (5.6.51), or be put to use by the Roman courts, referring to the new social role that the law would surely force upon him – "a shameful and weighty burden / To a public scaffold" (5.6.48-9). His proposed solution to the problem of being made an example by the earthly authorities, however, places him at odds with the heavenly ones, as his sister is quick to point out: "Are you grown an atheist? / Will you turn your body, / Which is the goodly palace of the soul, / To the soul's slaughterhouse?" (5.6.58-60). It is by drawing attention to the theological understanding of suicide as the destruction of selfhood that Zanche convinces Flamineo to allow himself to be shot, "Since it is most necessary none of us / Do violence to ourselves – let you or I / Be her sad taster: teach her how to die" (5.6.93-5). Invoking both the spiritual and the practical, Flamineo and Vittoria envision two very different kinds of death.

Once the women have shot Flamineo they reveal their true intentions and, like Gasparo and Lodovico did to Bracciano, attempt re-fashion their victim's final moments and therefore spiritual fate. Referring to the ways in which Flamineo will be re-shaped, Vittoria proposes to serve up her brother's

soul as an “off’ring for the infernal Furies” (5.6.138), while Zanche urges him to spend his final moments remembering “What villainies thou hast acted” and threatens that Flamineo, like his unfortunate brother, will be buried outside of Christendom with “a stake / Through thy body; for we’ll give it out / Thou didst this violence upon thyself” (5.6. 5.6.132-3; 147-9). For Flamineo’s part, he reacts to this treachery by echoing the vengeance inflicted upon his patron: he imagines the infernal plumber laying scalding hot “pipes in my guts” striking an image reminiscent of the “quicksilver” “A-melting” in Bracciano’s “politic brains” (5.6. 146; 5.3.164, 166). Flamineo gives every impression that, like Bracciano, his fate is being fashioned by his killers projecting their will into the afterlife.

When Flamineo stages a miraculous resurrection moments later, it therefore transforms the scene entirely, replacing a triumph of objectification of the dying and dead with what Barker calls a “darkly witty act of self-assertion”.⁸²

I am not wounded.

Flamineo riseth

The pistol held no bullets. ‘Twas a plot
To prove your kindness to me, and I live
To punish your ingratitude (5.6.146-9)

The transformation is made all the more powerful by its unexpectedness – not only are Vittoria and Zanche taken aback, but – unlike similar pseudo-resurrections such as Falstaff’s in *1 Henry IV* – Flamineo’s rise from the dead seems designed to surprise the audience also. The published text gives no indication that the audience would have been aware of Flamineo’s deception. It is certainly possible that Flamineo’s theatrical farewell prior to being shot (“Shoot, shoot! / Of all deaths, the violent death is best” (5.6.17-8)) would have

⁸² Ibid.

tipped some theatregoers off, or that Richard Perkins, the young leading actor of the Red Bull Company who most likely portrayed Flamineo in his original incarnation,⁸³ might have coloured those same lines with traces of irony or a wink at the audience. Current critical opinion, however, suggests that Flamineo's revival is most – perhaps only – effective as theatre (or as metatheatre) if Webster's audience “has shared the women's illusions”.⁸⁴ Given that Flamineo's false death and recovery presents such a substantial departure from the scenes of death which precede it in the play, and that the play itself is, as Coleman states, “intensely aware of the audience witnessing the performance, and frequently works to engage that audience deeply with the action presented on stage”,⁸⁵ this scene would certainly be well-placed to shatter such illusions. Unlike the momentary resurgence of independent action by dying Bracciano in the earlier scene which it echoes and inverts, Flamineo's revolt against the culture of objectification established during the play is not stifled by murderous hands restoring the status quo. Both Vittoria's and Zanche's guns are symbolically bereft of bullets while the “two other instruments” which Flamineo aims at his erstwhile murderers are loaded (5.6.168), granting him control over his life, death and identity once again.

Flamineo's triumph is short-lived; within moments he has been captured by Lodovico and Gasparo, who have arrived to enact final vengeance upon him, Vittoria and Zanche, and the scene ends with a bloodbath from which Flamineo does not rise. And yet even when Flamineo appears to be at his most helpless, unable to “strike again” at his “base hangman” Lodovico (5.6.196; 5.6.194), his behaviour on the brink of doom mimics his earlier mockery of death. Restrained

⁸³ M.C. Bradbrook, *John Webster, Citizen and Dramatist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 119.

⁸⁴ See Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. Christina Luckyj (London: Norton, 1996), 5.6.148n.; Barker, ““Another Voyage””, 35 and *passim*.

⁸⁵ Coleman, *John Webster*, 69.

and tied up by killers who attempt to impose their will upon his final moments via the rhetoric of early modern public executions, Flamineo responds with flagrant disregard for both the reality of his predicament and the conventions of dying sinners:

LODOVICO Dost laugh?
 FLAMINEO Wouldst have me die, as I was born, in whining?
 GASPARO Recommend yourself to heaven.
 FLAMINEO No, I would rather carry mine own commendations
 thither
 LODOVICO Oh, could I kill you forty times a day,
 And us't four years together, 'twere too little.
 (5.6. 196-201)

Goldberg interprets his behaviour on the brink of death as purposeful scorn for himself “as he realizes that he has been destroyed, body and soul, by social realities that he had vainly hoped, in his life, to transcend”.⁸⁶ Certainly, Flameneo’s is no ordinary deathbed penitence, and his facetious suggestion that he will carry his own commendation to Heaven indicates awareness of “his own corruptibility”⁸⁷ and therefore of his inability to truly define himself even in death.

However, any suggestion of Bracciano succumbing to powerlessness is contradicted by his staunch resistance to Gasparo and Lodovico who attempt, as they did with Bracciano, to shape Flamineo's dying thoughts to their own vengeful ends. The attempt fails, and their erstwhile victim laughs in their faces, even when Gasparo attempts to impress the severity of the situation onto Flamineo. In response to Gasparo's demand that Flamineo recommend himself to heaven in the manner of a penitent condemned criminal, Flamineo refuses to comply. His attitude here also flies in the face of the pursuit of unattainable goals that Robert Whitman considers as being so central to the moral

⁸⁶ Goldberg, *Between Worlds*, 257.

87 Ibid.

construction of the play.⁸⁸ Whitman argues that character development occurs in *The White Devil* when characters' goals are made increasingly unattainable, but far from dying, like Richard III, crying out for "a horse", (5.3.367), Flamineo's spends his final moments by disavowing completely any desires or aspirations. Lodovico, having warned Flamineo of the "vengeance" his ambition has brought down upon him, asks the rebellious courtier, "What dost think on?" (5.6.203), to which Flamineo replies, simply, "Nothing; of nothing. Leave thy idle questions. / I am i'th'way to study a long silence" (5.6.204-5). Flamineo's strength of personality thus renders his executioners unable to "terrify him at the last gasp", as Francisco might have put it. Far from putting Flamineo in mind of the "stinking soot" of the kind of "dark and horrid" underworld which Flamineo himself previously imagined while faking his death, they are unable to make him think of anything at all.

Vittoria's fate mirrors to an extent the discursive journey Flamineo takes *en route* to death. When Lodovico, unsuccessful in his attempts to incite Flamineo to fear his imminent demise, switches his focus to Vittoria and Zanche, Vittoria's similarly unwavering and unchangeable attitude towards death is every bit equal to that of her brother. As he did with Flamineo and Bracciano, Lodovico reminds Vittoria of her sins before murdering her, recalling the crimes of which she was accused by Monticelso in the courtroom scene: "O thou glorious strumpet" (5.6.208).⁸⁹ Vittoria responds by mocking him who would mock her, using the same fodder – his appearance – joking that "Methinks thou dost not look horrid enough; / Thou hast too good a face to be a hangman" (5.6.212-3). Her words, which might have been pronounced

⁸⁸ Robert Whitman, *Beyond Melancholy: John Webster and the Tragedy of Darkness*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1973), 91.

⁸⁹ See 3.2.246-7: "You came from thence a most notorious strumpet, / And so you have continued".

flirtatiously as if to pastiche the charges levelled against her, are followed by a further nod to the conventions of capital punishment, as Vittoria reminds Lodovico that if he truly is her “deathsmen” he should “do thy office in right form; / Fall down upon thy knees and ask forgiveness” (5.6.214-5). Just as Flamineo’s false death saw him switch from hapless puppet to puppet-master, so Vittoria, faced with the certainty of imminent death, uses her skill with language to enact a discursive role-reversal which sees Lodovico, the accuser preoccupied with forcing his victims to meditate on their sins, become the one in need of clemency.

Vittoria’s efforts are futile – the inversion she creates is figurative rather than literal as Lodovico does not actually do as his captive suggests and proceeds to run her through with his sword anyway. And yet despite her failure to put off the inevitable, Vittoria’s mockery of her would-be moral enforcer both before and after the killing blow has been struck nevertheless reverses the power dynamic of the scene. Vittoria’s demand emphasises for audiences the discrepancy between the Church-sanctioned justice of a conventional early modern execution and the distinctly un-Christian vengeance carried out by Francisco and Lodovico. Moreover, the behaviour of Flamineo and Vittoria towards their killers crystallises what Travis Bogard observes as a “defiance, this holding true to one’s essential nature” – what he elsewhere calls “stubborn consistency of self” – endemic in Webster’s tragic works, which “carries its own protection in its own self-sufficiency. It flourishes in adversity; in the lowest depths it achieves the sublime”.⁹⁰ Flamineo’s refusal to compromise his autonomy even in a hopeless situation is testament to the power of subjectivity to transform the terms by which death is approached. For this reason it has long

⁹⁰ Travis Bogard, *The Tragic Satire of John Webster* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 42, 55, 145.

been argued that Flamineo's and Vittoria's deaths constitute defiant performances of self-fashioning;⁹¹ that, despite their antagonistic roles in the tragedy – the deaths of brother and sister act as antidotes to the general confusion of identity that defines the preceding action of the play.

However, neither Flamineo nor Vittoria is unwavering in their tragic affirmation of self, and both suffer in their final moments a similar dislocation of identity that confounds the aspirations that they voice to die on their own terms. Vittoria is first to renege on her promise to “welcome death / As princes do some great ambassadors” (5.6.221-2). As Dollimore notes, although Vittoria initially claims to be “too true a woman’ to show fear” (5.6.225), she is a woman who has appropriated what Flamineo calls “masculine virtue” (5.6.246), ironically recalling Vittoria's own words at 3.2.138. Flamineo may insist to his dying sister that “She hath no faults who hath the art to hide them” (5.6.248), but his words only emphasise the failing performativity of Vittoria's situation. Her bravery is merely “art”, illusory, and as Vittoria succumbs to her wounds the woman who, scant few lines ago, railed against being fashioned a “strumpet” shifts from stark resilience to acceptance of that same accusation and her punishment in the manner of a condemned criminal: “Oh, my greatest sin lay in my blood”, she bemoans, referring to her passion, “Now my blood pays for it” (5.6.241-2). Unable to maintain the fair show of self-fashioning, Vittoria is forced to accept the foul truth in which, as punishment for her sins, her soul and posthumous fate are both forfeit. She dies like “a ship in a black storm, / [...] driven I know not whither” by forces beyond her control (5.6.249-50). Her words here, similar to those in Bosola's dirge in *The Duchess of Malfi* which describes

⁹¹ Ibid. See also: Michael Cameron Andrews, *This Action of Our Death: The Performance of Death in English Renaissance Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), 62; Barker, ““Another Voyage,”” 48 and *passim*.

those whose lives are “a general mist of error” must suffer “death, in a hideous storm of terror” (4.2.183-4), anticipate her dying confession that she lived as Flamineo feared that he did – too long amid the corrupting influence of others: “Oh happy they that never saw the court, / Nor ever knew great man but by report” (5.6.262-3).

While Vittoria is thus displaced and unable to retain control over her self-representation in death, Flamineo switches back and forth between a defiance in keeping with his earlier promise to “dare my fate / To do its worst” (5.4.143-4) and a sense of futility. Demonstrating a wilful insensibility to the severity of his situation, Flamineo’s darkly comical response to being mortally wounded reads as at once “aggressively defiant and masochistically demanding”⁹²: “Search my wound deeper: tent it with the steel / That made it” (2.235-6). His words echo his sister’s mockery of her “deathsmen”, and in his subsequent address to his sister he attempts to rekindle her dwindling sense of self-empowerment through employing a recalcitrant demeanour: “at myself I will begin and end”, he proclaims, arguing that “While we look up to heaven, we confound / Knowledge with knowledge” (259-261). Arguing that adherence to religious and moralistic conventions – the “black storm” drawing his sister to her doom – prevent individuals from knowing themselves, Flamineo proclaims his intention to circumvent hermeneutical appropriation of his afterlife by defining his death as an entirely personal experience, free from the confusions of church and state.

And yet freedom from being controlled in death is not necessarily the same thing as being in control of one’s posthumous fate. Although Barker interprets Flamineo’s demise as creating “new social possibilities”,⁹³ those possibilities are nevertheless presented in rather limited terms. To Barker,

⁹² Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 245.

⁹³ Barker, “‘Another Voyage,’” 52.

Flamineo's self-awareness in death projects him past the ending of the play in both narrative and metatheatrical senses, sending him, in the words of Webster's other great anti-hero Bosola, on "another voyage" (5.5.123).⁹⁴

"Voyage", however, implies a sense of progression which is not only absent from the language of the final scene in the tragedy, but is actively dismissed as a possibility. The only character in the scene to refer to death as a "voyage" is Zanche, who uses the term only to deceive Flamineo before shooting him:

"How, madam! Do you think that I'll outlive you?" she asks Vittoria as the three characters contemplate suicide, "Especially when my best self, Flamineo, / Goes the same voyage?" (5.6.90-1). Moreover, the voyage to which she refers – Flamineo's into death – does not transpire to be a "voyage" in the traditional sense of the word at all - the horrifying journey into hell which he describes is nothing more than a ruse.

As his mockery of posthumous experience suggests, instead of embarking upon a "voyage" beyond death, Flamineo's defiance of cultural and religious expectations manifests itself in his treating death not as the beginning of a new voyage, but rather the end. His reaction to his imminent demise is to isolate himself in the moment, removed, as Dollimore puts it, "from the past, the future, almost from consciousness itself".⁹⁵ Asked what he is thinking, his response is that of one embracing the finality – spiritually, at least – of death: "Nothing; of nothing: leave thy idle questions – / I am i'th'way to study a long silence" (5.6.204-5). He reiterates his nihilistic view in his powerfully transgressive suggestion that Vittoria, who fears for the fate of her soul, "cast anchor" (5.6.250), forgoing to suffer the storm of an afterlife by simply ceasing - "cease to grieve, cease to be Fortune's slaves / Nay, cease to die, by dying"

⁹⁴ Ibid., *passim*.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

(5.6.254). To Flamineo, the rest *is* silence, although his is not the silence anticipated by Shakespeare's Hamlet (*Hamlet*, 5.2.307), for while the prince hopes to leave something of himself behind, Flamineo's silence is one that removes his identity from the control of both church and state, killer and victim, the self and the other.

Flamineo's expectations, however, quickly prove unrealistic: in the world of *The White Devil*, no one is able to abstain from identity fashioning for very long. Even as he finishes telling Vittoria to "cease", he finds himself "in a mist!" (5.6.261), evoking the "black storm" in which his sister finds her soul tossed asunder, and suggesting that contrary to his wishes his spiritual fate is rife with uncertainties related to religious convention. As Rist observes, despite Flamineo's apparently clear defiance of a religious death in his longing for "silence", "there is an ironically contrasting, Catholic performance of remembrance" in his reference to Candlemas Day and self-comparison to "a spent taper" (5.6.267; 264).⁹⁶ His words create the impression of one "holding a candle before death" in a manner "resonant" with Catholic rituals related to the dead and dying,⁹⁷ the significance of which is compounded by his subsequent reference to another hallmark of pre-Reformation commemoration: "My life was a black charnel" (5.6.271). The very purpose of Catholic ossuaries, as explained in Chapter 1 of this thesis, depended both upon the remembrance of the dead by the living and the return of the deceased from the grave on the day of judgement – concepts which both confound the silence which earlier Flamineo insisted awaits him.

Flamineo's discursive fate is left as doubtful as his spiritual, as the language of his very final speech creates some confusion as to who exactly he

⁹⁶ Rist, *Revenge Tragedy*. 234.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 233.

wants his death to benefit. Apparently in response to Vittoria's dying warning to others against the perils of "court" and "great man", Flamineo likewise turns his demise into a message for "all that belong to great men [to] remember" (5.6.266). As a moral for other courtiers against suffering "pain by pain" in the name of ambition (5.6.275), he argues, there will be "some goodness in my death" (5.6.270), words which function at once to retrospectively shift the blame for his sins onto his fashioning at the hands of Bracciano, even as they anticipate a posthumous existence as discourse. His words present an abrupt about-face from his promise to "begin and end" at himself, a shift accentuated by his paradoxical – even comical – claim to have "lost my voice / Most irrecoverably" (5.6.272-3). While the notion of losing his voice concords with the "silence" and relinquishment of self that Flamineo predicted earlier in the scene, Flamineo continues to speak for another five lines, decrying his murderers and leaving the audience – both his and Webster's – uncertain as to how much of his identity he truly expects or desires to extend beyond the veil of death.

In his final rhyming couplet, Flamineo neatly summarises the contradictory nature of his demise, requesting for his death both silence and uproar: "Let no harsh flattering bells resound my knell. / Strike, thunder, and strike loud to my farewell" (5.6.276-7). As Barker argues, these lines are most notable for their metatheatrical quality in that the request for thunder, "one of the more common sound effects in English theatre", has the effect of cueing the playhouse sound crew with his last breath in "a social gesture which situates him firmly in the playhouse".⁹⁸ To Barker, these lines shatter the theatrical illusion, causing audiences "remember and even to rethink the player's relationships with the character he plays and with the spectators themselves",

⁹⁸ Barker, "Another Voyage", 48.

particularly in terms of the “difference between actor (who will speak again another day) and character (who will not)”.⁹⁹ While drawing attention to that discrepancy epitomises the tragedy’s running theme of identity – particularly during death – as chaotic and unstable, by the same token these climactic lines serve as Flamineo’s most defiant performance of self-perpetuation: Flamineo, we are told, “*is* a fictional character whose role may be played again and again – and whose loss of voice ... is thus not ‘irrevocable’ at all”.¹⁰⁰ By virtue of that same metatheatre, however, I suggest that the imminent recovery of Flamineo’s voice is conditional precisely *upon* the role being played again and again in ways that make it impossible for Flamineo’s performance to retain any sense of self. As a character in a play he is doomed to repeat the same actions, doomed to suffer the same spiritual and discursive identity-fashioning for as long as the tragedy is performed, something emphasised by his reference to thunder, which ties the denouement of play back to its opening scene in which princes are compared to “violent thunder” (1.1.11). He may well return to life in time for the next performance, but this does not equate to him persisting as an identity beyond death so much as it emphasises the unavoidability of his being fashioned at the hands of others – Bracciano, fate, the actor, Webster himself. Flamineo’s words do not project him “on ‘another voyage’ into the future”,¹⁰¹ they return him to the beginning of his original one – a voyage during which his identity will once again be fashioned by others.

Despite Flamineo’s best efforts to the contrary, like Isabella, Bracciano and Vittoria before him, he becomes just another victim of external re-fashioning; the ambiguity of his final moments concludes with apparent

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

submission to and powerlessness against the relentless atmosphere of death-oriented identity fashioning that so defines Webster's tragedy. Underlining this triumph of status quo, *The White Devil* concludes with the appearance of Giovanni and his armed guards prompting a final spate of re-fashioning that sees the self-fashioning of both the dead and soon-to-be-dead succumb to the influence of external forces. Flamineo, Vittoria and Zanche are the first to be re-purposed when Lodovico, confronted and wounded by Giovanni's cohort, claims responsibility for the corpses filling the stage:

I do glory yet
That I can call this act mine own. For my part,
The rack, the gallows, and the torturing wheel
Shall be but sound sleeps to me. Here's my rest;
I limned this night-piece, and it was my best.
(5.6.294-8)

Part bluster, part wish-fulfilment, Lodovico takes the opportunity to fashion not only the corpses of his enemies as an artfully-constructed tableau, but also to fashion his own posthumous legacy, anticipating the death which will come from either his bullet wound or Giovanni's torture. On the one hand the "night-piece" refers to the deaths of Flamineo and Vittoria. Although the audience are fully aware that he did not quite get what he wanted from his final exchanges with his victims (he was unable, as with Bracciano earlier on, to successfully intimidate Flamineo before his death), he refashions their deaths into a triumph of justice – his "best" work. On the other hand, his pride has as much if not more to do with his representation of himself than of the dead: echoing his earlier sentiments to "have our plot be ingenious, / And have it hereafter recorded for example" (5.1.75-6), he frames his murders as a "most noble deed" (5.6.281). The "act" he takes such pride in is his performance of self – a performance which he hopes will be remembered for posterity.

As ever, though, self-fashioning in *The White Devil* is met by external forces that attempt to quash the dissenting self that Lodovico projects, and re-fashion his posthumous legacy from a heroic “example” of righteous vengeance to a condemnation of murder. Moments after pledging to “Defy the worst of fate, not fear to bleed” (5.6.282), Lodovico is shot down by Giovanni’s guards – a symbolic reclamation of his deviant identity by the state – and his “noble deed” is deemed by the young Duke a “massacre” (5.6.286). Branded criminals, Lodovico and his accomplices are sent away “to prison, and to torture” (5.6.292), but not before Giovanni emphasises that “justice” (5.6.292-3) goes beyond physical sentencing and will extend to a complete discursive re-fashioning of the events and those who were part of them:

Remove the bodies. See, my honoured lords,
What use you ought make of their punishment
Let guilty men remember their black deeds
Do lean on crutches, made of slender reeds.
(5.6.299-302)

Addressing both the characters on stage and Webster’s audience, Giovanni’s final lines condemn “the bodies”, a phrase which takes in not only the corpses on stage but also the men he has just arrested, neatly stripping them of their identities and preparing them for their bodily and discursive “punishment”. And yet even while the control which Giovanni exerts in these final lines over the identities of both the dead and the soon-to-be-dead would appear to represent a triumph of death-oriented identity re-fashioning, this conclusion cannot negate entirely the efforts of various characters throughout the play to establish their identities in their all-important dying moments. While it is certainly the case that no example of death-oriented self-fashioning in *The White Devil* goes without challenge from external forces, the power of Webster’s tragedy lies precisely in

the suggestion that regardless of what people do to them or say about them at the end of their lives, characters like Vittoria and Flamineo are remembered after the play has finished for their flamboyant defiance of received understandings of what constitutes a “good” death – even when that defiance is punished. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Webster has Lodovico argue his fate to the very end, claiming that the instruments of torture will be “but sound sleeps” to him (5.6.297). The desire to surmount objectification is contagious throughout *The White Devil*, and at every turn characters strive to project their fashioned selves beyond death. At best, these characters live long afterlives in the minds of Webster’s audience; at worst, nothing is certain and their fates are left in a mist.

“I am not to be altered”: Body and Soul in *The Maiden’s Tragedy*

When the Tyrant of *The Maiden’s Tragedy* demands in the play’s opening scene that the Lady be brought forward as his “illustrious bride” (1.1.118), the Lady’s response is a powerful statement of self-fashioning that neatly encapsulates the play’s central conflict between subjective will and external objectification: “I am not to be altered” (1.1.122). Her “I” is a figurative line in the sand; it acts as both a bold assertion of her subjectivity and subversive refusal, as Eileen Allman writes, to play the role of “mindless object or removed third person” assigned to her by the male figures in the scene who assume that “her eye will stand / Upon advancement” rather than her integrity (1.1.63-4).¹ Yet even as the Lady’s self-fashioning attests to the potency of her spirit it also anticipates – and, as critics such as Anne Lancashire have argued, is contingent upon – the destruction of her body.² For all the transgressive potency of the Lady’s rejection of state power and gendered expectations, her attempt to define her selfhood, like the self-fashioning of Flamineo and Vittoria, is resisted at every turn by powerful outside forces, and this struggle for identity paves the way for a third act in which the Lady takes her own life.

The Lady’s death resonates thematically with other such plays which dramatise the pursuit of a chaste beauty by a lustful ruler – a common motif in Jacobean drama – often accompanied by the deaths of those same women. Lady Anne in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (c.1592), for example, is seduced and later murdered by Richard, while in Middleton’s own *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606) Vindice carries the skull of his murdered beloved Gloriana as an ever-

¹ Eileen Jorge Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 109.

² Anne Lancashire, “*The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*: A Jacobean Saint’s Life”, *The Review of English Studies*, 25/99 (August, 1974), 267-279.

present reminder of his vengeful purpose. Even in plays where the pursued woman survives her tyrannical pursuer, audiences might instead have seen her death averted at the last moment, as in Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (c.1611), or fabricated, as in John Fletcher's and Philip Massinger's *The Humorous Lieutenant* (1619). The circumstances of the Lady's death are, however, distinguished from these other plays by the fact that she is a willing agent of her own demise and willingly takes her own life in a clearly denoted act of self-fashioning. As Webster does in *The White Devil*, Middleton presents the concepts of identity and death as inextricably bound, but while the central characters of the former tragedy thrive on confusion before finding themselves "lost" in a mist of uncertainty, the Lady acts with a clearly-defined moral certitude, and she dies precisely so that she might avoid being "lost the cruellest way" (3.1.80).

Whether or not she manages to successfully contain her identity, however, is another matter altogether. Irving Ribner, in his discussion of the moral tropes in Middleton's work, once remarked that the typical progression of a Middleton protagonist

involves not a process of transformation, but rather the stripping away of false pretences to reveal an inner corruption which has always existed. The characters upon whom Middleton concentrates never have any real choice. They are damned to begin with, and they need only learn that this is so.³

Ribner's observation is particularly pertinent when considering the consequences of the Lady's self-fashioning. Although she kills herself precisely so that she might transcend the struggle between the individuated self and the threat of objectification by outside forces, her death actually serves to

³ Irving Ribner, *Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order* (London: Methuen, 1962), 129.

problematise her identity and create an environment of moral and commemorative uncertainty in which it rapidly becomes unclear whether or not she has avoided damnation after all. The conflict between the Lady (and, following her death, her surrogate Govianus)⁴ and the Tyrant has traditionally been interpreted allegorically, as a distinctly Christian triumph of chastity over lust in what Lancashire terms a “highly religious play”.⁵ As Lancashire argues, the play is heavily loaded with references to saints’ lives and to the life of Christ, and the cumulative weight of these allusions position the Lady’s “virgin victory” (3.1.178) as a Christ-like martyrdom. The circumstances of her death also, however, have much in common with the dilemma faced by the condemned women of Middleton’s England, for whom the scaffold offered what Karen Newman describes as an unrivalled “opportunity to deploy the powers of representation to which they were often denied access”.⁶ And yet, as Aebischer observes, these women paid for their “empowering ability to ‘self-fashion’ with their lives”.⁷ For the Lady, death is shown to be not only her sole means of definitive self-fashioning, but also the price that she pays in order to remain unaltered and escape objectification at the hands of the Tyrant.

By explicitly dramatising an act in which an individual simultaneously asserts and defeats their selfhood, Middleton creates a sense of moral confusion that is subsequently compounded by the exploration of the physical and spiritual ramifications of the Lady’s suicide in the second half of the play.

⁴ The exact nature of the relationship between Govianus and the Lady is unclear, as Anne Lancashire has observed. Although the Lady is referred to in a song as Govianus’ “wife”, she is also apparently free to marry the Tyrant, and the play repeatedly insists upon her virginity (4.4.117; 4.5.26; 3.1.176). I subscribe to Lancashire’s view that probably “we are to consider them as betrothed to one another” (Lancashire, “*Second Maiden’s Tragedy*”, 267, n.2).

⁵ Lancashire, “*The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*”, 279.

⁶ Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: UCP, 1991), 68.

⁷ Pascale Aebischer, *Jacobean Drama: A Reader’s Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 128.

The play has a clear interest in theories of the soul, as indicated, Hopkins notes, by the fact that the heroine's father, Helvetius, has a name obviously identifying him as an allegorical representative of Swiss Protestantism,⁸ and over the course of the play we see the Lady split, in Susan Zimmerman's words, into three distinct personae – "the living Lady, prior to her suicide in midplay; her sainted spirit or ghost; and her desecrated corpse".⁹ Although these personae are clearly connected by the Lady's determination to elude sexual and physical objectification, the fact that she is represented in three different forms undermines the strength of living Lady's initial, adamant, "I". As Lisa Hopkins remarks, "despite all [the Lady's] courage, constancy and chastity, her actions seem initially to have had no effect at all".¹⁰ Not only can her body apparently be "used against her will",¹¹ but the appropriation of her corpse has clear spiritual repercussions on her Ghost, in brazen contravention of Protestant teachings that the soul is irrefutably distinct from the body. The Ghost, in turn, appears on two separate occasions in order to entreat Govianus to restore her to her "rest" (4.5.79).

As suggested by the subversive doctrinal ramifications of the Lady's afterlife, when Middleton explores the issues surrounding the Lady's posthumous fate, he necessarily invokes and deconstructs certain ideological oppositions. In what follows I examine five key scenes – including that of the Lady's death – in which the Lady's corpse, Ghost, or both become discursive loci around which theological and commemorative perspectives regarding death-oriented identity fashioning are placed into contention. I begin by

⁸ Lisa Hopkins, "The ghost and the soul in *The Lady's Tragedy*", in *Early Modern Ghosts*, ed. John Newton (University of Durham: Centre for Seventeenth-Century Studies, 2002), 45-54, 46

⁹ Susan Zimmerman, "Animating Matter: The Corpse as Idol in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*", *Renaissance Drama: Performing Affect*, New Series 31 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 215-245, 227.

¹⁰ Hopkins, "The ghost and the soul", 53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

examining Lady's suicide and its immediate aftermath in 3.1, in which the apparent salvation presented by the Lady's distinctly Christian martyrdom is consistently undercut by a darkly subversive undercurrent that emphasises the inability of the subjective will to ever fully contain the threat of re-fashioning posed to the dead by the living. From there I shift my focus to the complex significations of the play's two tomb scenes at 4.4 and 4.5 in which, respectively, the idolatrous Tyrant disinters the Lady's body, and the Ghost subsequently appears to Govianus. Functioning as a pair, these scenes directly contrast the forces of subjective will and external objectification, and also engage with religious debates concerning the relationship between the self, the body, and the soul.

The problematic significations of these scenes anticipate the final scene of the play, 5.2, in which the Ghost appears alongside her corpse – an unusual occurrence in early modern drama – and Govianus responds to the Tyrant's re-fashioning of the Lady's body by further re-fashioning it with poisonous make-up and a living-dead coronation. This scene, which at first glance seems to present a powerful response to posthumous re-fashioning, ultimately serves to dramatise its mechanics, and in doing so effectively negates the Lady's self-fashioning. The bloody conclusion to the play's secondary plot, featuring Govianus' brother Anselmus and his unfaithful wife in 5.1, works to compound the vitiating effect of the play's conclusion. When the Wife directly invokes the Lady's memory in her final moments, she draws attention, I argue, to the inherent artifice of moral distinction between the deaths of the two female characters. Although the parallel plots may be intended to contrast the death of a martyr with the death of a sinner, both women are nevertheless treated as the physical and discursive property of others. By dramatising both acts of

modification to the Lady's constructed self and also her physical and spiritual attempts to resist the artifice of living characters, Middleton forces his audience to consider whether the Lady achieves what she sets out to through her suicide. While it may certainly be argued that her death-oriented self-fashioning is an empowering process in and of itself, the play's conclusion suggests that she is ultimately constrained by the circumstances of her demise, damned, as Ribner put it, from the very start.

Martyrdom and the "eye of goodness"

By the standards of the post-Reformation Church, suicide, what Richard Cobb calls "the most private and impenetrable of human acts",¹² was deemed one of the "foulest Villanies"¹³ – a sin that transcended earthly transgressions and constituted no less than a crime against the Almighty. Christian doctrine therefore, as prince Hamlet famously complains, generally denounced "self-slaughter" (1.2.132). The Lady's suicide in 3.1, however, is usually interpreted in entirely different terms, deemed to represent a "triumph over the evil forces threatening her sacred 'honor'"¹⁴ and a moment of apparent spiritual salvation which constitutes the central turning point of the play in both structural and thematic terms. The reasons why the Lady's death is generally treated as distinct from early modern conceptions of sinful suicide are intrinsically related to notions of self-fashioning: drawing from traditional rape narratives, which repeatedly show suicide to be a brave act that salvages the woman's reputation, Middleton places classical and Christian models of suicide in direct

¹² Richard Cobb, *Death in Paris, 1795-1801* (Oxford: OUP, 1978), 101.

¹³ Richard Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest* (London, 1650), sig. Ll2r

¹⁴ Richard Levin, "The Double Plot of *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 3/2 (Spring, 1963), 219-231, 228.

conflict with one another, and in doing so strikes a palpable contrast between self-preservation and self-cancellation.

Despite the fact that, as Roland Wymer observes, the “very basis of Christianity, the death of Jesus, could be regarded as a form of suicide”,¹⁵ Church rhetoric denoted the act of taking one’s own life as unequivocally sinful. As Patrick Henry observes, the word “suicide” did not yet exist in the English language at the time that *The Maiden’s Tragedy* was written,¹⁶ first arriving in the mid-seventeenth century,¹⁷ but various compound terms were used that – through accident or design – were evocative of the derogatory sentiments of the Church during their “Era of Severity” against the act.¹⁸ Brian Cummings lists “self-homicide”, “self-murder” and “self-destruction” as recognised variants,¹⁹ each of which conveyed the sense of sinning against one’s own subjectivity, of defeating one’s “self”. So severe was that sin, churchgoers were told from the pulpit, that to enact it even in a desperate grasp for liberation could achieve the opposite effect, tying you to your suffering for all eternity. “Thinke you to get ease by shortening your owne life?” asks clergyman Gabriel Powell in one such invective against suicide. “Nay, so farre shal you be from finding of any ease or rest, that by so doing, these your temporall ... afflictions, shall be turned into

¹⁵ Roland Wymer, *Suicide and Despair in the Jacobean Drama* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1986), 5. Christ’s sacrifice was sometimes emblematised by the pelican, which was believed to pierce its own breast in order to nourish its young with its life-blood. I return to this particular symbol in my discussion of mayoral pageants in Chapter 4.

¹⁶ Patrick Henry, ‘The Dialectic of Suicide in Montaigne’s “Coustume de l’Isle de Cea”’, *Modern Language Review*, 79 (1984), 278-89, 280.

¹⁷ “suicide”, *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.2a, ascribes the first reference to 1656 in Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia* (London, 1656). *OED Online*, <<http://tinyurl.com/q633vjs>>, accessed Dec. 2013.

¹⁸ So named by Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy for the intensification of Church hostility against suicides during the period, which lasted from the early sixteenth century up until the end of the English Civil War in 1653. See MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 1990), 15-77 and passim.

¹⁹ Brian Cummings, “Freedom, Suicide and Selfhood in Early Modern Thought”, *LMU CAS e-series*, 7 (2011) <<http://tinyurl.com/qdep2s8>> accessed Dec. 2013, 1.

everlasting torments, in the unquenchable flames of hell fire”.²⁰ The Church’s position on those who took their own lives extended to their corpses which were placed in unmarked graves situated away from the burial sites of the sanctified dead and denied traditional rites of burial. Shakespeare’s Laertes might be outraged by the lack of ceremony afforded Ophelia, who is “hoed in the earth while God’s back is turned”, as Andrew Sofer puts it,²¹ but the administering Priest only reiterates what everyone else, from the comical gravediggers upwards, already knows: “She should in ground unsanctified have lodged / Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayer / Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her” (5.1.177-9). The significance of both the Priest’s confrontation with Laertes and the gravediggers’ several references to “Christian burial” hinges upon Shakespeare’s audience being familiar with the ignominy and the loss of both spiritual identity and earthly commemoration as consequences of “self-slaughter”.

And yet, even during a period of such prevalent and unequivocal doctrinal influence, the notion of an individual such as the Lady killing herself in order to save her selfhood would not have been altogether alien to Middleton’s audience. While the officially-sanctioned response to the threat of the Tyrant would have required the Lady to exercise what Mary Beth Rose refers to as the “heroism of endurance”,²² a growing number of early modern writers had begun to embark upon a “re-examination of the ethics of suicide”,²³ questioning why exactly one might be required to passively suffer, as Hamlet famously puts it, “The slings and bolts of outrageous fortune” instead of “to take arms against a sea of troubles, / And by opposing end them” (3.1.64, 65-66). The “wide-ranging

²⁰ Gabriel Powel, *The resolved Christian* (London, 1600), H6r.

²¹ Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 100.

²² Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 124.

²³ Wymer, *Suicide*, 2.

moral debate”²⁴ owed much to Seneca’s ideas about bondage and freedom with respect to selfhood and the body, and particularly his assertion that the soul is enslaved in “serfdom on earth” in the body:

For that body is all that is vulnerable about me: with this dwelling so liable to injury there lives a spirit that is free [...]. I shall dissolve our partnership when this seems the proper course, and even now while we are bound one to the other the partnership will not be on equal terms: the soul will assume undivided authority. Refusal to be influenced by one’s body assures one’s freedom.²⁵

Michel de Montaigne, in his essay “A Custom of the Isle of Cea”, borrows heavily from Seneca’s “serfdom” analogy in his description of the role that suicide might play in enabling advantageous and definitive self-fashioning. Why would anyone, he asks, choose to suffer pain or fear violence when “the most obliging present Nature has made us ... is to have delivered into our own custody the keys of life”?²⁶ Proceeding to describe death as “the infallible cure of all”, he adds that, in brazen defiance of Christian doctrine, “The most voluntary death is the finest” – particularly when conditions are such that “to live is far worse than to die”.²⁷ John Donne engaged with similar themes in his *BIAΘANATOS*, arguing that there are clear cases justifiable in Christian philosophy in which death is the lesser of two evils:

to preserve my life when I am justly taken prisoner, I will become a slave ... If I propose to my selfe in this SELF-HOMICIDE a greater good, though I mistake it, I perceive not wherein I transgresse the generall law of nature.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Seneca’s Epistle 65, Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic: Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, trans. Robin Campbell (London: Penguin, 1969), 123-34.

²⁶ Michel de Montaigne, “A Custom of the Isle of Cea”, in *The Essays of Montaigne, Complete*, trans. Charles Cotton, ed. William Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1877), Project Gutenberg <<http://tinyurl.com/ogrr5qv>> accessed 5 Jan 2014.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John Donne, *BIAΘANATOS. A Declaration of that Paradoxe* (London, 1644), sig. Gr-Gv.

To Donne, then, as with Montaigne, taking one's own life might be considered acceptable – even laudable – if by doing so one might forestall a dishonourable life, such as one subject to tyranny, enslavement or moral turpitude.

Yet while the Lady certainly echoes, with her final words, the language used by Donne and Montaigne, proclaiming as she picks up Govianus' sword that "with this key the prisoner can slip forth" (3.1.164), the specific threat presented by the Tyrant also places the Lady's death and self-fashioning squarely within the realms of the rape narrative, a sub-genre which bore its own conventions pertaining to female suicide and with which Middleton's audience would have been very familiar. One of the age's most influential books, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, had recorded the lives of a number of Christian women who avoided rape by committing suicide.²⁹ Like these characters, the Lady chooses death not simply to escape capture by "the Tyrant's watch and guard" (3.1.163), but to prevent herself from suffering erotic objectification – from being "borne with violence to the Tyrant's bed" (3.1.97). Within the framework of the rape narrative suicide assigned a clearly-defined moral value which, while usually depicted in terms of Christian virtue, nevertheless presents a clear departure from the parameters imposed by the Church. As Jocelyn Catty explains, suicide is commonly invoked as the culmination of a test of the victim's chastity where, as with the Lady, love and rape are opposed: "If she fails [to dissuade her attacker] and is raped, suicide may redeem her, or alternatively, an impulse towards suicide followed by marriage to the rapist".³⁰ Not only, then, was it expected of women in these narratives to prove their chastity by choosing

²⁹ Julia Briggs, Introduction to Thomas Middleton, *The Lady's Tragedy: Parallel Texts*, ed. Julia Briggs, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2010, first published 2007), 833-838, 836. See also John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, ed. J. Pratt, 8 vols. (London: 1877).

³⁰ Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011 [first published 1999]), 100.

suicide over defilement, but suicide was also treated as a viable method of purging oneself from defilement, so long as it involved an element of contrition on the victim's part. "The idea of a last-second repentance was a useful tool", Wymer explains, "in combining natural charity (and the approval of the early Church) with the theological orthodoxy",³¹ as in the case of Lucrece, whose story was recounted by both Shakespeare and Middleton. In Shakespeare's 1594 poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, the "spotted, spoil'd, corrupted" (1173) Lucrece is nevertheless able to release an "immaculate and spotless" (1656) soul from the polluted prison of her body by proving her chastity through suicide:

Mine honour be the knife's that makes my wound;
My shame be his that did my fame confound;
And all my fame that lives disbursed be
To those that live, and think no shame of me.

(1201-1204)

After Lucrece has stabbed herself, the poet adds that "Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeathed / Her wingéd sprite" (1727-8), and in Christian terms, remarks Wymer, "the reference to her contrition is a necessary prerequisite of her eternal bliss".³² Middleton's 1600 poem *The Ghost of Lucrece*, by way of contrast, exploits the central paradox of a pre-Christian (and therefore damned) Lucrece who nonetheless has "compelling Christian instincts".³³ his heroine in no way challenges the appropriateness of this fate, but expresses a deep "yearning for Christian salvation".³⁴

³¹ Wymer, *Suicide*, 98.

³² Ibid.

³³ G.B. Shand, Introduction to "The Ghost of Lucrece", in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2010 [first published 2007]), 1985-1988, 1988.

³⁴ Ibid.

What these poems have in common with both each other and *The Maiden's Tragedy* is their shared concern with the commemorative, as well as the spiritual, afterlives of their female protagonists – something which distinguishes their suicides from the egocentric philosophies of Seneca, Montaigne and Donne. Shakespeare's Lucrece is mindful of her enduring "fame" in the eyes of "those that live", while her Ghost in Middleton's poem longs for "a chaste memorial" (291) – which she receives, in fact, through the writing of the poem itself, introduced by a prologue describing her as an example to all "martyred graces" (40). In both cases the potential for suicide to restore one's spiritual honour goes hand in hand with the notion of defining one's reputation, suggesting that self-fashioning through death enables the re-orientation of one's narrative of violation into one of chastity. The Lady's death follows the same pattern, as she locates her selfhood firmly within her immortal soul, and dies in the belief that the emancipation of her soul, even via suicide, will allow her to retain her chaste selfhood even in the face of sexual appropriation. "O this extremity!" Govianus exclaims upon hearing the Lady's plan to end her life, "Hast though no way to scape 'em but in soul?" (3.1.83) In response, the Lady explains in no uncertain terms that while living long enough to succumb to the objectification of the Tyrant, who threatens to control and contain her through her body, would see her lost forever, suicide will allow her "peace in ... destruction" (3.1.84) both spiritually and commemoratively: "His [the Tyrant's] lust may part me from thee, but death never. / Thou canst not lose me there" (3.1.145-146). Her peace is, as with Shakespeare's Lucrece, apparently guaranteed by her pious insistence upon praying before her death, a "chief" business lest she be "forgotten / Where I desire to be remembered most" (3.1.109-110).

Despite illustrating, then, a position at odds with the theological establishment of Middleton's England, the Lady's decision to take her own life depends entirely upon a Calvinistic insistence upon the pre-eminence of the soul rather than the body as the seat of her selfhood, and thus represents the dramatic nadir of her refusal to be altered at the beginning of the play – a decision which she explains in terms of a choice not simply between two different men representing “reeling fortune” and “low condition” respectively (1.1.172-3), but between the transient and bodily, and the lasting and spiritual:

‘Tis not the titles
Nor all the bastard honours of this frame
That I am taken with. I come not hither
To please the eye of glory, but of goodness
And that concerns not you, sir: you're for greatness.
(1.1.124-128)

Renouncing the transient “greatness” of the court, the Lady identifies herself “with the eye of goodness ... contrasted with the ‘eye of glory,’” expressing a clarity of will which, “working through the Lady's mind, dictates her choice of dress, speech, and behavior”.³⁵ The repeated pun on “I” / “eye” throughout this passage only draws greater attention to her self-control, aurally granting her moral authority over the very “glory” which she decries. Her eye stands not “upon advancement” and wealth as Govianus fears; instead, her gaze is fixed on spiritual “goodness” by which, the Lady tells us, “the mind ... sets his master forth” (1.1.168), an assertion which echoes Hamlet's famous claim that he might be “bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space” (2.2.246-7). Beyond the spiritual or imaginative liberation to which Hamlet alludes, however, is an awareness on the part of Middleton's protagonists that this freedom might also enable the construction of enduring reputations. “If there be man / Above a

³⁵ Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, 110.

king in fortunes”, Govianus proclaims with his thoughts fixed on self-fashioning, “read my story” (1.1.130-131).

The nobility of the Lady’s suicide when faced with rape is counterbalanced by the Wife’s adultery in the sub-plot. The significance of the relationship between Middleton’s two plots, which present two major female figures of whom one is good and one is bad, and who are linked only through a barely-realised and tangential relationship to Govianus, has been regularly debated. Simon Schoenbaum has complained of the “clumsy and arbitrary fashion” with which the two stories are linked and which has led critics such as Hopkins to argue that the sub-plot, despite offering a “sustained counterpoint” to the primary plot, remains “quite separate” to the story of the virginal Lady.³⁶ On the other hand, a good deal of critical opinion – particularly in recent years – has set about establishing meaningful thematic connections between the two narrative threads, expanding upon the earlier work of Richard Levin, who argued that despite the “completely different ethical contexts” of the deaths of the Lady and the Wife, the two stories were nevertheless “meaningfully connected”.³⁷ Swapan Chakravorty, for example, considers both plots in terms of the recurring theatrical metaphors, and compares the “play” enacted by the Tyrant with the Lady’s corpse in the final scene with the “inset play” which the Wife orchestrates in 4.1. to trick Anselmus into believing her chaste – a plan which fails spectacularly and ends with the death of all characters involved.³⁸ To Chakravorty, the sub-plot points to similar values governing sexual power relations in both political and private life, blending domestic intrigue with the

³⁶ Simon Schoenbaum, *Middleton’s Tragedies*, cited in Briggs, “Introduction”, 833; Hopkins, “The ghost and the soul”, 46, 49.

³⁷ Richard Levin, “The Double Plot of *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 3/2 (Spring, 1963), 219-231, 227, 220.

³⁸ Swapan Chakravorty *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 84.

royal drama of the primary and sub-plot in a way “integral to the play’s portrayal of the structures of political and sexual domination”.³⁹

In *The Maiden’s Tragedy*, however, the juxtaposition that Chakravorty observes of public and private relationships is itself symptomatic of a trend in early modern drama to draw what Catty notes as a “comparison between chaste and unchaste women which serves to heighten the glory of the plays’ heroines”.⁴⁰ Certainly, in *The Maiden’s Tragedy* Middleton uses the contrast between his two major female characters to present sexual desire as a self-destructive and spiritually dangerous “test”, as Levin puts it, which occurs in the opening scenes of both plots.⁴¹ For both women, the test results in death, regardless of their decision: this much is suggested by the “funeral garment” in which the Lady is clothed even as she refuses the Tyrant (1.1.115), while the Wife, even as she suddenly feels herself drawn to Votarius, is keenly aware that surrender to Votarius’ temptation is to “run thus violently / Into the arms of death, and kiss destruction” (1.2.247-8). Unavoidable though their deaths might seem, there is a vast difference between how the suicides of both women are presented, a difference only emphasised by the Wife, who promises to “imitate my noble sister’s fate” (5.1.80) prior to her death. The Lady, as a paragon of chastity, passes her test and dies with salvation fixed firmly on her mind, certain in the knowledge that she brings “true peace to those about her”,⁴² the Wife’s failure, on the other hand, produces “corrosive conflict in those about her – not only between the men involved, but also within their own souls – and results in their damnation”.⁴³ Like the Lady, the wife knows that the world of male power is little more than a “flesh-market” (1.2.271), but instead of bending her spirit

³⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁰ Catty, *Writing Rape*, 99.

⁴¹ Levin, “The Double Plot”, 223.

⁴² Ibid., 227.

⁴³ Ibid.

towards “goodness”, she succumbs to lascivious pleasure and knowingly dooms herself: “Welcome, ruin” (5.1.118), she cries, just before she “*purposefully runs between*” the swords of Anselmus and Bellarius to her death (5.1.121 SD) and embraces with her final words the man responsible for her fall: “I come, Votarius!” (5.1.122). Middleton, therefore, vividly equates the opposition between the chaste Lady and unchaste Wife with the symbolic conflict between soul and body – or, more specifically, between spiritual transcendence and material or “wanton folly” (4.1.98).

While the play’s depiction of the Lady’s suicide springs from notions of the Christian martyr, in his depiction of the Wife’s fate Middleton seems to draw from the wider cultural connection between sexual experience and death in which both are perceived as the loss of the individuating self and, as has been argued cogently by the philosopher Georges Bataille, “eroticism opens the way to death ... the ultimate surrender”.⁴⁴ Certainly, the Wife suffers greater de-individuation than any other character in the play, and the scene of her death sees her identity vascillate from one extreme to another, in a constant state of flux as a direct result of her lasciviousness. Not only is the final scene of the sub-plot constructed entirely around her attempting to generate a false perception of her chastity, but she is herself “deceived ... in her own deceit” (5.1.132) by her servant Leonella, and ends up inadvertently killing Votarius, who dies under the false impression that his lover has betrayed him: “You’re a most treacherous lady!” (5.1.108). When the Wife kills herself out of grief for Votarius, her final actions are immediately misinterpreted by Anselmus as the act of “A constant lady” (5.1.126). Anselmus and Bellarius, both mortally wounded, die after offering two vastly different interpretations of the Wife’s

⁴⁴ Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1957), 24

chastity – Bellarius spends his final moments condemning her as a “wise, close adulteress” (5.1.156), but not before Anselmus expires “Close by the chaste side of my virtuous mistress” (5.1.138, 143). These conflicting commemorations thus ostensibly encapsulate the Lady’s loss of selfhood.

The final indignity which the Wife suffers, however, seems to have been added, according to the editors of the most recent major edition of the play, following Middleton’s submission of the original text to Sir George Buc, the Master of the Revels to King James.⁴⁵ It appears as though either Buc or Middleton were concerned that the discrepancy between Anselmus’ and Bellarius’ final perceptions of the Wife left too ambiguous the notion of her punishment, and so felt the need to insert an additional passage following her death in which Anselmus, roused from death by Bellarius’ expository remarks, violently turns on his Wife’s corpse. Branding her “A whore!” (B5.1.170), he flings her “from my believing breast / With all the strength I have” (B5.1.171-2) in a final, palpable demonstration of the loss of identity which she has suffered as punishment for succumbing to bodily temptation.

Particularly in contrast to the sins of the Wife, then, the Lady’s death in the name of her spiritual wellbeing rather than her life appears to signify the virtuous culmination of “a Jacobean saint’s life”.⁴⁶ Her virgin victory is, however, emphatically undermined by the simultaneous onstage presence of Sophonirus, whose freshly-dead and re-fashioned corpse constitutes a sizable elephant in the room. Sophonirus, a courtier serving as the Tyrant’s ambassador to the Lady, initially functions as the catalyst for the Lady’s decision to take her own life, and represents the moral depravity of the Tyrant’s court: he would happily

⁴⁵ Middleton, *The Lady’s Tragedy: Parallel Texts*, ed. Briggs, 839-906. This edition gives the play in two versions – an “A” text, which is “as close as possible” to Middleton’s original composition, and a “B” text, which presents the play “as it was performed, after various cuts and alterations” (Briggs, Introduction, 833).

⁴⁶ Lancashire, “*Second Maiden’s Tragedy*”, 279.

subject his wife, were she “so preferred” by the Tyrant (1.1.35), to sexual objectification if there were any chance that they would both be “made by’t” (2.3.75), while the precious jewel which he bears as a gift for the Lady serves as objective correlative to the materialism against which the Lady defines her spiritual “treasure” (3.1.77). Given the clear moral divide that Middleton strikes between the corrupt courtier and the pious Lady, it is likely that Middleton placed the deaths of Sophonirus and the Lady alongside one another in order to, as he does through the contrast between the Lady and the Wife, emphasise the virtues of his female protagonist. While parallels between Sophonirus and the Lady should not, therefore, be overstated, it is nevertheless the case that once Govianus mortally wounds Sophonirus, the comically depraved figure takes on a far more subversive role, as his self-fashioning in death scene darkly mirrors the Lady’s in her imminent suicide. This results in a sense within the scene that Middleton, like Webster in *The White Devil*, juxtaposed conceptions of “good” and “bad” deaths in order to problematise notions of death-oriented self-fashioning rather than celebrate them.

Just as Webster’s Flamineo treats his death as an opportunity to enact one final performance of selfhood, so too does Sophonirus treat his death as an opportunity to fashion his own commemorative identity – even in the face of an uncertain afterlife. Although his being stabbed certainly brings about “an end” (3.1.32), he is able to defer this end for fifty-one lines so that he may, quite literally, have the last laugh at the expense of his enemies:

Sophonirus How quickly now my death will be revenged,
 Before the King’s first sleep. I depart laughing
 To think upon the deed.

[*He dies*]

Govianus ‘Tis thy banquet.

Down, villain, to thy everlasting weeping,
That canst rejoice so in the rape of virtue
And sing light tunes in tempests when near
shipwrecked,
And have no plank to save us.
(3.1.49-55)

Sophonirus' dying thoughts are entirely egocentric, and emphasise, like Flamineo's "only the dying subjectivity itself" rather than any consideration of the afterlife.⁴⁷ The apparent ease with which he takes some measure of control in his own destruction, singing "light tunes in tempests" (3.1.54) not only mimics the defiant early modern criminals discussed by Ralph Houlbrooke, who planned their own deaths, "seeking at all costs to appear cheerful and debonair [and presenting] a performance of studied, stylish nonchalance",⁴⁸ but also anticipates the virtuous Lady's attempts at enacting that same control over her death later in the scene. The transgressive potency of his self-fashioning is only emphasised by Govianus' attempt to transpose Sophonirus' laughter with weeping – Govianus' verbal assault on the corpse cannot, by his own admission, have any influence upon the soul of his enemy. If, as he accepts, the Lady has "no way to scape [her enemies] but in soul?" (3.1.83) and we are therefore to read the Lady's death as a removal from objectification which relies on the separation of body and soul and is worthy of "Eternal praise" (3.1.179), then we must also view Sophonirus' death in those same terms. While one might construe his undoubtedly ignoble fate as emphasising the Lady's spiritual triumph, the fact that both figures enjoy the same freedom to self-fashion regardless of their respective Christian virtues creates an uneasy association

⁴⁷ Barker, "Another Voyage," 45.

⁴⁸ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: OUP 1998), 188.

between the two that persists, embodied by Sophonirus' corpse on the periphery, through the remainder of the scene.

There is, moreover, an intriguing semantic connection between the laughing courtier and the Lady – who, in her own words “scorns death / As much as great men fear it” (3.1.161-2). Sophonirus' name closely resembles that of Sophronia, who is named in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* as one of the early Christian martyrs who circumvented rape through committing suicide. Foxe represented the resistance of these martyrs “as part of the long and ultimately victorious struggle of the Protestant church against Catholic persecution”,⁴⁹ and Lancashire cites the story of Sophronia as one of Middleton's primary sources for the Lady's story.⁵⁰ That her name should be echoed by Sophonirus, however, rather than the Lady herself (who remains nameless throughout) attaches to the courtier a peculiar semantic resonance by which he resembles a martyr for depravity, who tarnishes the Lady's ostensible martyrdom by enacting what Middleton's Christian audience would have considered a “bad” death in the name of everything which the Lady opposes.

The suggestion of a thematic and morally transgressive correlation between Sophonirus and the Lady becomes all the more apparent once the Lady has taken her own life, as the scene requires that, for however brief a moment, the bodies of Sophonirus and the Lady, both dead characters played by living, breathing actors, lie alongside that of the Lady's “fearful master” Govianus, who has fainted. In this fleeting instant Middleton creates a tableau of living death within which, as far as his audience are concerned, there is very little visually different between the three bodies. But rather than being hindered by the use of living actors to play dead bodies – what Zimmerman describes as

⁴⁹ Briggs, Introduction, 836.

⁵⁰ Lancashire, “*Second Maiden's Tragedy*”, 271-2.

theatre's "failure to represent the corpse"⁵¹ – the scene seems to exploit this problematic theatrical convention, at once "aggressively meta-theatrical and sensational", capitalising on the "symbolic potential" of the dead body.⁵² While the events prior to this tableau leave the audience in no doubt that the Lady in life occupied a moral position superior to both Sophonirus and the "poor-spirited" Govianus (3.1.151), by visually levelling the "good" and "bad", the alive and the dead, Middleton symbolically deconstructs the distinctions between these dichotomies. In doing so, he gives his audience cause to question whether or not she has gained anything by it in death.

As in *The White Devil*, though, the spiritual destination of individuals engaged in death-oriented self-fashioning is only half of the story, and the dead inevitably suffer bodily and commemorative re-fashioning regardless of the strength of their subjective will. This fact is aptly demonstrated when Govianus subsequently manipulates the dead Sophonirus, re-fashioning his corpse in a manner similar to Flamineo's treatment of Camillo, or Hamlet's appropriation of Polonius' "guts" in Shakespeare's *Elsinore* (3.4.202). By placing Sophonirus "Against the door" so that when the Tyrant's soldiers "rush in", "Blinded with fury" and with their "ungoverned weapons" drawn, they will believe that they are responsible for his death (3.1.181-3), Govianus successfully places his "lord All-Ass" (3.1.189) into the midst of an entirely new narrative in which his "prattling" was the reason for the Lady's death: "All your intents he revealed largely to her", reveals Govianus, "And she was troubled with a foolish pride / To stand upon her honour, and so died" (3.1.216-219). Not only, then, is Sophonirus blamed for "his own folly" in standing too near the door (3.1.191), but he is also

⁵¹ Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 106, 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 13.

branded a traitor by the Tyrant's men despite his final thoughts having been of the King: "We have done the King good service to kill him", says the First Fellow (3.1.223). This exchange involving the Tyrant's armed guards, Govianus, and Sophonirus' corpse, while relatively brief, nevertheless situates the scene firmly within the contest of the conventional post-Reformation distrust of "the materiality of the body, and – at the most profound and originary level – the materiality of the corpse".⁵³ By acknowledging the corpse as something which might be "reinscribed", to borrow Zimmerman's term, Middleton evokes a theological tension that colours our understanding of the final moments of the scene which see Govianus carry the Lady's corpse away. As "honest and religious" as the Lady is (3.1.239), and despite her dying wish to be free from physical constraints, the fate of Sophonirus' corpse indicates that she is no less vulnerable than he to posthumous bodily re-fashioning, and anticipates her disinterment by the Tyrant in the second half of the play.

"A religious trembling": Idolatry and the body / soul divide

When the Lady takes her own life to facilitate a spiritual escape which might protect her chastity – and by extension both her soul and her own conception of selfhood – she plays an active role in the fashioning of her identity. By taking ownership of herself, she actively resists circumscription to what Marilyn French has termed the "inlaw" principle, that is, a "wispy" female benevolence that complements and is subordinate to male power.⁵⁴ In death, however, she is unable, physically at least, to withstand objectification at the hands of the

⁵³ Zimmerman, "Animating Matter", 216.

⁵⁴ Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), 16.

Tyrant, whose corporeal obsession with the Lady only increases after her burial, and who subjects her body to violent and invasive erotic re-fashioning: she is disinterred, sexually violated, painted with cosmetics and dressed in at least two changes of clothes – all posthumous manifestations of the very material re-fashioning which she gave her life to avoid. The Lady's suicide may have gone some way towards dismantling, as Allman puts it, the "political-erotic triangle formed by suitors – and a father – who consider her no more than a prize of battle",⁵⁵ but the Tyrant nevertheless claims her body as his trophy once the battle is ostensibly over.

One need only compare the language used by the Tyrant to rationalise his approach to refashioning the Lady as his lover, and the language of the Lady in 3.1 as she justifies self-murder to see that the two perspectives represent completely polarised philosophies of self-fashioning. To the stoic Lady, death separates her selfhood from her body in an absolute manner: "I am like one / Removing from her house", who "Makes shift with anything for the time she stays" (3.1.135-6, 138). The Tyrant, meanwhile, announces after digging up the Lady's corpse that, "Since thy life has left me, / I'll clasp the body for the spirit that dwelt in't / And love the house still" (4.4.111-13). In his words, which depend upon both a Calvinistic divide between the spirit and the body, and a connection between the corpse and the afterlife that Middleton's audience would have associated with idolatrous Catholicism, the body is simultaneously a memorial to and an extension of the deceased Lady. "The pronoun references here", writes Sheetal Lodhia, "emphasize the Tyrant's ambivalent treatment of the Lady as both object, 'the body', 'the house', and

⁵⁵ Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, 109.

lover, using the intimate 'thee' instead of the more formal 'you'.⁵⁶ That he considers her body to be the more important part of her selfhood is highlighted by his desire to unlock it in order to fashion it to his liking, later claiming that "The house is hers, the soul is but a tenant" (5.2.3), a turn of phrase that effectively reverses the Protestant hierarchy of the soul and the body. Here, the soul is merely an obstacle to his sinister desires; a "temporary guest in the more material, more substantial, more accessible, and more desirable body of the Lady".⁵⁷ The philosophical and theological conflict represented by the Lady and the Tyrant becomes the focal point of the second half of the tragedy, beginning with the Tyrant's appropriation of the Lady's dead body. By playing out the conflict over two realms, the physical and the spiritual, before bringing both realms together, figuratively and literally, with the reunion of the Lady's corpse and her Ghost at the dénouement of the play, Middleton creates a divide between the Lady's body and soul even as he highlights their interconnectivity.

Middleton's exploration of the relationship between body and identity begins even before the Tyrant removes the Lady from her tomb, when he and his Soldiers first enter the cathedral. The First Soldier comments that he fears only "the whorish ghost of a quean I kept once" (4.4.5-6). Not only is there is an element of demeaning comparison in his use of a word "that might just echo in our heads when the dead Lady is later crowned a queen",⁵⁸ but his words also introduce a disconcerting erotic undercurrent to the proceedings which anticipates the Tyrant's claim that "the monument woos me: I must run and kiss it" (4.4.9) and the Soldiers' many bawdy puns about "the battering of a lady's tomb" (4.4.40) and "entering upon a breach" (4.4.55-6). This language attaches

⁵⁶ Sheetal Lodhia, "'The house is hers, the soul but a tenant': Material Self-Fashioning and Revenge Tragedy", *Early Theatre*, 12/2 (2009), 135-61, 143.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁵⁸ Hopkins, "The ghost and the soul", 53.

sexual significance to the Lady's corpse before she is even revealed on stage, and implicitly transforms the connotations of her death from virtue and chastity to erotic potential - a potential which is subsequently realised when the Tyrant removes her body and begins to physically to objectify and manipulate her. Unconstrained by the Lady's inconvenient soul, he gains a measure of control over her commemorative afterlife regardless of the Lady's spiritual fate, free not only to "kiss" and "clasp" her body (4.4.90, 112), but to begin re-writing the narrative of her death in ways which directly contradict her dying motivations: "'Tis I, sweet lady, prithee speak. / 'Tis thy love calls on thee, thy King, thy servant" (4.4.87-8).

The exchange between the Tyrant and his Soldiers, who are reluctant to disinter the Lady's corpse, offers an enlightening glimpse of the frightening potential for identity fashioning through bodily manipulation.

First Soldier She's dead, my lord!

Tyrant True: if she were alive,
Such slaves as you should not come near to touch
her.
Do't, and with all best reverence place her here.

First Soldier Not only, sir, with reverence, but with
fear.
You shall have more than your own asking once.
I am afraid of nothing but she'll rise
At the first jog and save us all a labour.

Second Soldier Then we were best take her up and never
touch her!

First Soldier Life, how can that be? Does fear
make thee mad?
I've took up many a woman in my days,
But never with less pleasure, I protest!
(4.4.69-80)

Like the body of Camillo or the skulls in *Hamlet's* graveyard scene, the Lady's unresisting body becomes another "improper property",⁵⁹ ripe for re-interpretation. While the bare bones of Elsinore, however, insist upon commemorative "identification as well as fragmentation", in Sofer's terms,⁶⁰ the fragmentation which the Lady's body insists upon is a fragmentation of self; of body and soul. Her corpse, occupying the liminal space between recent death and imminent decay, generates a whole range of discursive possibilities, and foregrounds the Lady's loss of control over her selfhood in death. The First Soldier's fear that the Lady might "rise again" verbally transforms the Lady from a Jacobean saint into a pre-Reformation revenant. His notion conveys at once the subversive horror of the Tyrant's necrophilia while also drawing, even in the form of a joke, a link between the Lady's body and her selfhood – a link which may well have been compounded had the actor playing the Lady doubled as her corpse, as Zimmerman believes was likely the case in the final scene of the play.⁶¹ The Soldiers' subsequent comments on 'taking up' the Lady, meanwhile, invoke openly the Tyrant's necrophilia, and frame the Lady's corpse as the very sort of sexual object that she died to avoid being treated as. The comic relief of the Soldiers in this scene, like the interjections of the gravediggers in *Hamlet*, thus serves double purpose, providing a stark contrast to the morbidity of their situation which nevertheless works to emphasise the transgressive atmosphere of the wider scene. While the riddles, jokes and small talk of Shakespeare's gravediggers all ultimately end, as Anne Barton remarks, "in the same place: a hole in the ground",⁶² the conversation of the Soldiers – who are employed, after all, to perform the opposite function of gravediggers, disinterring rather

⁵⁹ Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 83.

⁶⁰ Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props*, 90.

⁶¹ Zimmerman, "Animating Matter", 238, n. 16.

⁶² Anne Barton, Introduction to *Hamlet* (London: Penguin, 1980), 45.

than burying – points towards a whole range of discursive possibilities for the dead. The Lady, removed from the subjective force of her “I”, has become a “blessed object” for outside forces to project their own narratives upon (4.4.59).

The most powerful of these forces is, however, the Tyrant, whose description of the freshly disinterred corpse as a “blessed object”, as well as his insistence in the above exchange that his Soldiers pay “reverence” to the Lady, firmly situates his own re-fashioning of the Lady’s physical self within the realms of the theologically contentious issue of idolatry. The Tyrant is not the only ruler to dabble in illicit and idolatrous eroticism; Marlowe’s Tamburlaine, for example, has his wife, Zenocrate, embalmed and wrapped in gold after she dies so that he might carry her with him as a false idol.⁶³ In Middleton’s depiction of the Tyrant’s obsession, though, writes Zimmerman, the writer “directly addresses the issue of idolatry”,⁶⁴ which manifests, unusually for the period, as part of the central narrative in the sensational and taboo form of necrophilia. Middleton’s exploration here of what Charles Forker terms the “love-death nexus”, which amounted to “something of a cultural obsession in the early seventeenth century”,⁶⁵ not only uses the titillating possibilities of necrophilia “to equate [...] depraved and idealistic love with death”.⁶⁶ The Tyrant’s physical manipulation of the corpse constitutes the most sustained objectification of the Lady – and, by extension, the most sustained attack on her fashioned self – in the play. Moreover, the frequent connections which Middleton draws between the

⁶³ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, ed. J. S. Cunningham and Eithne Henson (Manchester: MUP, 1998), Part 2, 2.2.130.

⁶⁴ Zimmerman, “Animating Matter”, 215.

⁶⁵ Charles R. Forker, *Skull Beneath the Skin: The Achievement of John Webster* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 237, 135. More recently, Richard Madelaine has convincingly argued that “lust, tyranny and death” are generally interconnected in early modern drama, and constitute a “‘dark and vicious place,’ a generic location that connotes both illicit desire and the grave”. See Richard Madelaine, “‘The dark and vicious place’: The Location of Sexual Transgression and its Punishment on the Early Modern English Stage”, *Parergon*, 22/1 (January 2005), 159-184, 159.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 243

Tyrant's material infatuation with the Lady's corpse and spectre of seditious and Catholicised idol worship directly invoke contemporary religious debates, and in doing so serve to vividly problematise the relationship between the Lady's body and soul.

According to Zimmerman, the Reformation's attack on the anthropomorphism of Catholic images "was symptomatic of its deep distrust of materiality and its properties: the materiality of the image or idol, the materiality of the body, and – at the most profound and originary level – the materiality of the corpse".⁶⁷ To devout Protestants, Catholics modes of worship, including the forms of corporeal commemoration that were abolished along with the saints' relics and charnel houses – embraced in material bodies a false autonomy not entirely dissimilar to that which the Tyrant seeks to generate by bestowing adornments and cosmetics onto the corpse of the Lady. Those at the court who serve under the Tyrant display an emphatically Calvinist reaction to the Tyrant's depraved foregrounding of the Lady's body, and liken the Tyrant's "mere idolatry!" (5.2.20) to speaking "Latin prayers" (5.2.20, 23). "I make curtsy to my damnation" complains the First Soldier, forced to bow at the feet of a corpse (5.2.20).

The Tyrant's behaviour, on the other hand, indicates a recusant insistence upon the agency of the corpse: as Lodhia observes, "in stealing the Lady's body", the Tyrant "assumes he has stolen the Lady herself".⁶⁸ Although he acknowledges that "Life is removed from her now (5.2.93), he still insists upon addressing the corpse as though it were living: "I love thee yet, above all women living" (5.2.25). Furthermore, his plan to "beat ... off" the frown of death (5.2.112) by using cosmetics to "force beauty" (5.2.100) onto the Lady's face

⁶⁷ Zimmerman, "Animating Matter", 216.

⁶⁸ Lodhia, "The house is hers", 147.

combines dangerous connotations of both sexual deviance and specifically Catholic idolatry. Middleton's audience would have been familiar with the association between face-painting and meretriciousness,⁶⁹ and also the frequent links made by religious polemicists between the Church of Rome and the artifice of the prostitute. As Annette Drew-Bear contends, literature of the period commonly used the image of the painted face as visual shorthand for sins including "pride, lust, deceit, and devilish temptation"⁷⁰ John Bale's *Image of Both Churches* (c.1545), for example, identified the Catholic Church with the Scarlet Woman of Babylon in the Apocalypse,⁷¹ while a much later text by Richard Brathwait, *Time's Curtaine Drawne* (1621), compares cosmetics to religious idolatry and sexual transgression:

Lascivious Idoll, that with tainted cheekes,
 Sinne-drawing eye, thy sacred vow dost breake
 With thy *Creator*.⁷²

There is one major difference between the Tyrant's painting of the Lady and the contemporary misogynistic depictions of cosmetics: as Farah Karim-Cooper astutely observes, just as Middleton's other famous painted female, Gloriana in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, whose skull is coated with poison and used to kill another necrophiliac tyrant, the only painted face in *The Maiden's Tragedy* is that of a virtuous woman.⁷³ Unlike the types of women described by Brathwait and Bale, the sinfulness represented by make-up in this scene is that

⁶⁹ See, among others, Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 68; Andrea Ria Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin: the Painted Body in Early English Drama, 1400-1642* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), Chapter 4.

⁷⁰ Annette Drew-Bear, *Painted Faces on the Renaissance Stage: The Moral Significance of Face-Painting Conventions* (London and Toronto: Bucknell University Press, 1994), 17.

⁷¹ Briggs, Introduction, 838.

⁷² Richard Brathwait, *Time's curtaine drawne, or the anatomie of vanitie* (London: Printed by John Dawson, 1621) sig. A5v.

⁷³ Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 86.

of the observer, not the one forced to wear it, whose re-fashioning is only, as it were, skin-deep. Furthermore, the function of paint in this scene is ultimately positive, restoring “health to the political body by cleansing the court of its perverse usurper”.⁷⁴ And yet within the grander moral scheme of the scene, the intrinsic virtue of the Lady is not quite enough to render insignificant the illicit symbolic potency of face-painting. As Karim-Cooper explains, with her painted face, the Lady “is at once saintly and sexually provocative, erotic flesh and cold marble”.⁷⁵ Govianus, who infiltrates the court in the guise of the artist commissioned by the Tyrant to “hide death upon [the Lady’s] face” (5.2.72), is keenly aware that in the very act of attempting to rescue the Lady’s body, he taints her with the sins of lust and materialism: “A religious trembling shakes me by the hand / And bids me put by such unhallowed business” (5.2.82-3). By physically re-fashioning the Lady with paint, as well as new clothing and jewellery from his “treasure-house of art” (4.4.122), the Tyrant thus transforms her body into an emblem of wantonness, vanity and heretical iniquity – in spite of that fact that these are the very sins which she opposed by dying.

While the “greatness” of the Tyrant’s court thus affects change through and on the body of the Lady, as Lodhia points out, his obsession is with “her body and not her soul”.⁷⁶ That his focus is exclusively on the body, for the body’s sake alone, is made abundantly clear in the final scene of the play when he witnesses the Ghost of the Lady, the woman whose death drew “so many pities from these springs” (5.2.75), and is horrified to find that his notion of the Lady’s body as an ‘empty house’ has been shaken: “I called not thee, thou enemy to firmness, / Mortality’s earthquake” (5.2.144-5). On the contrary,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁷⁵ Farah Karim-Cooper, “To Glisten in a Playhouse: Cosmetic Beauty Indoors”, Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper, eds., *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), 194.

⁷⁶ Lodhia, “The house is hers”, 147.

however, the “firmness” to which he refers – his material fixation – is exactly what calls the Lady’s Ghost, as his physical interference with her body is shown to have far-reaching spiritual repercussions.

When Govianus visits the Lady’s tomb to praise her for her virtues, the Lady’s voice is heard, followed by the entrance of her Ghost:

Lady’s Voice [*within*] I am not here.
Govianus What’s that? Who is not here? I’m forced to question it.
Some idle sounds the beaten vaults send forth.

On a sudden, in a kind of noise like the wind, the doors clattering, the tombstone flies open and a great light appears in the midst of the tomb. Enter the Ghost of the Lady, as she was last seen, standing just before him all in white, stuck with jewels, and with a great crucifix on her breast.

(4.5.40–3)

Her spectacular entrance, which must have looked impressive indeed on the Blackfriars stage, would have put Middleton’s audience firmly in mind of saints’ and martyrs’ lives. In addition to “Saints in life and death” sometimes being “accompanied by light”,⁷⁷ their lives, Lancashire tells us, also often contained parallels to the life of Christ. The circumstances of her appearance to Govianus, who “comes to the Lady’s tomb early in the morning, with religious devotion, only to find her body gone, and a spirit appearing with a great light, rushing wind, and a rolling away of the stone from the tomb” certainly recalls Christ’s resurrection,⁷⁸ as do the Ghost’s first words: “I am not here” (4.5.40), which echo those of the biblical angel (“He is not here”, [Matthew, 28:6]) at Christ’s tomb on the Resurrection morning. If we interpret the Lady as she intended herself to be remembered – as a martyr for whom dying was merely the “key”

⁷⁷ Lancashire, “*Second Maiden’s Tragedy*”, 272.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 272-3.

with which she was able to “slip forth” (3.1.164), her autonomy in death might therefore initially be interpreted as evidence of her *remaining* free, transcending the manipulation of external forces and in doing so present a triumph of self-fashioning.

However, the Ghost’s explanation to her “Dear lord” (4.5.54) for her spiritual return is entirely discordant with both the traditional conceptions of saints’ lives and Protestant beliefs in the divide between body and soul after death. In fact, her return appears to negate entirely the strength of her martyr-like self-fashioning:

The peace that death allows me is not mine.
The monument is robbed: behold I’m gone,
My body taken up.

I am now at court
In his own private chamber. There he woos me
And plies his suit to me with as serious pains
As if the short flame of mortality
Were lighted up again in my cold breast,
Folds me with his arms and often sets
A sinful kiss upon my senseless lip.

(4.5.60–62, 66–72)

The Tyrant’s modifications to her corpse, then, appear to have provoked the Ghost’s appearance. Middleton thus turns the conventional paradigm on its head, as “the body of the Lady haunts her ghost, or the material haunts the spirit”,⁷⁹ and results in, as with *Hamlet*, a Catholicised ghost which threatens to be incompatible with a belief system that not only no longer allows it a place in respectable society. For the Lady, however, the problem is compounded by that fact that, up to and including the moment of her death, she was herself a proponent of that very belief system which her presence as a Ghost now

⁷⁹ Ibid., 147

confutes. She died in order to place herself “above the injuries of blood” (4.5.56), but for reasons which would have resonated deeply with Middleton’s audience’s lingering cultural memory of Catholic mysticism, her spirit has been directly influenced – drawn back, remarkably, from eternal “peace” (4.5.60) – through her body.

Considered in this sense, one might draw parallels between the displaced Ghost of the Lady, and Aebischer’s interpretation of Old Hamlet’s Ghost in Shakespeare’s tragedy as “a surrogate corpse”.⁸⁰ Aebischer uses the term to invert John Kerrigan’s earlier description, in his study of “the relationship between memory and revenge” in *The Spanish Tragedy*, of Horatio’s corpse as “a surrogate ghost to whet his [Hieronimo’s] purpose should it ever blunt”.⁸¹ To Aebischer, Old Hamlet’s Ghost performs the opposite function, standing as an “insubstantial and therefore insufficient substitute for the wounded, neither quite live nor yet entirely dead-and-buried body”.⁸² If Old Hamlet’s Ghost may therefore be described as “an iconic sign for an absent human being”,⁸³ so too might the Lady’s Ghost be interpreted as something of an uncoupled signifier. Indeed, the same is even more explicitly true for her than it is for Old Hamlet: while “Doubt and uncertainty surround every appearance” of *Hamlet’s* apparition,⁸⁴ who is described in such tantalisingly vague terms as “illusion” (1.1.130) and “apparition” (1.2.211), Middleton never gives his audience any reason to question the identity or motivations of the Lady’s Ghost. When Govianus seeks proof of the apparition’s honesty, he need look no further than the empty tomb in front of him. While the absence of a firm body of evidence

⁸⁰ Aebischer, *Violated Bodies*, 71.

⁸¹ John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 175.

⁸² Aebischer, *Violated Bodies*, 71.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Nigel Alexander, *Poison, Play and Duel: A Study in Hamlet* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 30.

might create an aura of uncertainty surrounding Old Hamlet, in *The Maiden's Tragedy* the absence of a body *is* proof.

The doubt surrounding the Lady's Ghost, then, is not so much to do with the reality of, or moral value attached to, her appearance, but rather with her sense of self, which the machinations of the Tyrant have troubled. Unlike her use of "I" in the opening scene of the play which "negates [the Tyrant's] right to author her" by "affirm[ing] what she is not",⁸⁵ her "I am not here" (4.5.40) completely fails to affirm anything about the Lady's self. Quite the opposite, in fact. By "I am not here", the Lady seems to refer to the absence of her body from the tomb – something which has led Lodhia to argue that the Lady's "I" – her self – "inheres in her body", rather than the soul.⁸⁶ Scant few lines later, however, the Ghost appears to speak for herself – "I leave 'em [details of the Tyrant's lust] to thy thought", she tells Govianus, "My rest is lost; thou must restore 't again" (4.5.78-9). The meaning of what her "rest" might entail is left intriguingly ambiguous. Is she here foregrounding her spirit's removal from the "peace" of death? Or are her thoughts fixed now on the material as she laments the manner in which the "rest" of her self, her body, has been re-fashioned by the Tyrant? If, as Allman argues, subjectivity "is represented as an 'I' that has choice and, therefore, agency",⁸⁷ the Ghost's language cast doubt on Zimmerman's argument that "the Lady's corpse is without spirit, or, from an iconoclast's perspective, dead". Rather, both body and soul seem connected by an "unruly agency" that, as Lodhia argues, "troubles both a stable and 'whole' conception of the self, as well a notion of the soul/self as indivisible from the

⁸⁵ Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, 109.

⁸⁶ Lodhia, "The house is hers", 145

⁸⁷ Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, 109.

body until after death”.⁸⁸ The personal pronouns used by the Ghost highlight the shifting and ultimately elusive nature of the self as body or spirit,⁸⁹ and in doing so make it increasingly unclear as to where exactly her agency lies.

“Piteous wrongs”: a conclusion

The confusion surrounding the true location of the Lady’s selfhood, and the extent to which she is able to re-establish the identity which she chose for herself in her suicide at 3.1., builds to a conclusion which promises to bring clarity to the situation by drawing together the Lady’s body and her Ghost, but ultimately fails to provide any true resolution, moral or otherwise. Nowhere is this ambivalence about the relative immanence of body and soul, material and spiritual, more obvious than in the Lady’s clothing at the culmination of the scene. When the Ghost appears for second time, after Govianus has painted the Lady’s face with poison and the Tyrant is poisoned by kissing her, she enters, according to Middleton’s stage directions, “dressed in the same form as her body” in the Tyrant’s chair (5.1.143 SD). This marks a change from her appearance in 4.4., in which she wore the clothes that she was buried in, despite that scene taking place, as Lodhia notes, *after* the Tyrant has bedecked her with jewels once already”.⁹⁰ The Ghost now wears the same ‘black velvet’ dress as her re-fashioned corpse in the Tyrant’s chamber. To both Lodhia and Zimmerman, the moment of the Ghost adopting the same wardrobe as the cadaver is symbolic of the Tyrant’s ‘depraved transformation [of the Lady’s

⁸⁸ Lodhia, “The house is hers”, 135-6.

⁸⁹ Riggs, Introduction, 837.

⁹⁰ Lodhia, “The house is hers”, 147.

corpse] into the Tyrant's idol'.⁹¹ Re-fashioned in every sense of the term, the Lady's attire would suggest that despite her enemy having "his end upon him", (5.2.151), his mark has been irreparably laid upon her.

On the other hand, her attire in this climactic scene may represent her role in the very "deed" which she commissioned Govianus to enact (5.2.150). Just as Middleton's "Gloriana is no mere prop",⁹² but in fact the engineer behind Vindice's plot, we may see that the Lady is the chief instigator of her revenge upon the Tyrant (without her appearance, Govianus may have never thought to open up the Lady's tomb at all), and her revelation to Govianus that the Tyrant "will send privately for a hand of art / That may dissemble life upon my face" is what guides Govianus' role as "a picture-drawer" (5.2.34). By using the Tyrant's materialism against him – he could only be defeated by the application of poisoned cosmetics – she, to borrow a phrase from Sofer, "out-emblemizes the emblemizer", using Govianus to purposefully affect a material fashioning of her corpse.⁹³ This, Karim-Cooper notes, is a clear inversion of the "notion that cosmetic paint is a corrosive material", and "instead it becomes a cleansing agent for the political body and a meta-theatrical device used to revalue cosmetic materiality within a theatrical context".⁹⁴ In this sense, then, her sartorial transformation may stand for the purposeful posthumous self-fashioning which constitutes the nexus of her revenge upon her attacker; becoming a poison which destroys, rather than masks, deception and vice.

⁹¹ Zimmerman, "Animating Matter", 234.

⁹² Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props*, 111

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁴ Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics*, 67.

The ambiguity of her clothing is compounded by the final action of the play, which sees Govianus, having won the “contest of masculinity”,⁹⁵ mark his triumph in what Lodhia notes as being a disconcertingly materialistic manner.⁹⁶ After the Lady’s Ghost exits the scene, Govianus starts to present the same type of material fixation that the Tyrant does, dressing up the Lady’s body with another form of jewellery, and shifting her body from the chair into the throne:

And since the body of that virtuous lady
Is taken from her, in memory
Of her admired mistress, 'tis our will
It receive honour dead as it took part
With us in all affections when it lived.
Here place it in this throne, crown her our Queen,
The first and last that ever we make ours.
(5.2.186–192)

At this point, the Lady’s Ghost returns again to attend her body, but her reasons for doing so have divided critics. Allman reads the scene as a successful resolution which repairs the damage done by the Tyrant both to the Lady’s self and to the state. Her spirit returns “unforced and unbidden ... to attend her body and bless Govianus’s reinvestment as monarch”.⁹⁷ At closure, Allman adds, she remains enthroned on stage, spirit and body, and active participant in their play’s triumphant, comic finale”.⁹⁸ Lodhia, on the other hand, reads in the Lady’s return the resurgence of the struggle between body and soul which has come to define the play. Her reappearance “lays bare her mistrust of Govianus, who reacts defensively at her re-appearance”.⁹⁹ “O welcome blessed spirit! / Thou needst not mistrust me” (5.2.196-7). To Lodhia, the Ghost is driven by the fear

⁹⁵ Kevin Crawford, “All his intents are contrary to man”: Softened Masculinity and Staging in Middleton’s *The Lady Tragedy*, *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*; 2003, Vol. 16, 101-29, 105.

“Softened Masculinity”, 105.

⁹⁶ Lodhia, “The house is hers”, 145.

⁹⁷ Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, 117.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Lodhia, “The house is hers”, 145.

that Govianus “might fail to bury her corpse, and who might alter her body even more.”¹⁰⁰ Like the skulls in Sofer’s discussion of bodies as props, then, the Lady’s body refuses “to settle for the role of either living attribute or dead object”, and functions as “a kind of no-man’s land, a crucible for exploring the porous boundary between property and person”.¹⁰¹ While the final moments of the play bring both body and soul together again, then, in doing so they only further problematise the concept and location of self within the play.

In closing, I am reminded of Allman’s concise summary of the moral outcome of *The Duchess of Malfi*: “The revengers may “determine the play’s action, but the Duchess determines its meaning”.¹⁰² If we are to judge the meaning of *The Maiden’s Tragedy* by the fate of the Lady, we must observe that, despite her ostensible moral superiority to characters such as the Tyrant and Sophonirus, even she is unable to circumvent the problems associated with death-oriented identity fashioning. As the Lady’s ghost joins her corpse, what should be a triumphant visual reunion of body and soul also unavoidably emphasises the division between the Lady’s two identities – one which she fashioned herself, and the other which was imposed upon her. Like the conclusion to *The White Devil*, then, the scene thus collapses life and death, body and soul, past and present into a tableau of conflicting agencies and self-fashioning.

What is particularly fascinating about both *The Maiden’s Tragedy* and *The White Devil*, however, is that regardless of whether or not the death-oriented self-fashioning which takes place throughout them is necessarily successful, by dramatising various forms of opposition to the external forces of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props*, 114

¹⁰² Ibid., 147-8.

objectification and posthumous re-fashioning, they nevertheless represent an anxiety regarding – and even a resistance to – the types of posthumous re-fashioning which were taking place in everyday early modern England (the same objectification which Anne Boleyn references in her dying speech). Even at a time when religious doctrine downplayed and denounced any connection between the dead body and soul, between this life and the next, the extent to which one could retain a physical and commemorative presence in this world after dying remained a source of concern for playwrights and theatregoers alike. They were, in short, contemplating living death.

Chapter 3

A brief history of haunting

There were a vast number of cultural and literary sources for ghost stories in Renaissance England. The sheer variety of source material meant that there was no such thing as a 'typical' ghost in the early modern imagination, so that ghosts were governed by few conventions, if any. First, the ghosts who were once accepted by medieval Christianity flagrantly disregarded the conventions of changing times. Specifically, the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches disagreed entirely on the matter of ghosts, and the shift away from medieval mysticism enforced by the Church of England meant that within the span of a few short generations the English people were exposed to two completely different systems of dealing with the supernatural. Just as the attitude towards the dead was deeply affected by the Reformation and led to the coexistence of conflicting beliefs and practices to do with burial, so the beliefs regarding ghosts were divided between the former Roman Catholic and new Protestant teachings. The former taught that ghosts were normally the spirits of human beings, and required compassion; the latter taught that ghosts were generally demonic, and demanded to be treated with suspicion. Nothing the Protestant regime said or did, however, could fully remove ghosts from the English imagination. "Ghosts", as folklorist Theo Brown puts it, "were oblivious to official opinion and continued to come and go at their own sweet will", even in a new era in which, as the new Church of England taught, they simply did not belong.¹

Secondly, regardless of religious sensibilities, ghosts themselves in both pre- and post-Reformation England were rarely known to adhere rigidly to the

¹ Theo Brown, *The Fate of the Dead: A Study in Folk-Eschatology in the West Country After the Reformation* (Ipswich: D.S. Brewer Ltd., 1979), 19.

constraints of time and space. One need only consider the aforementioned apparition recorded by Elizabeth Southwell, who we recall claimed a maidservant saw the monarch's ghost before Queen Elizabeth had even expired.² Similarly, in the middle ages Gervase of Tilbury recounted the tale of a young man from Apt who "had the gift of ubiquity: at the same moment he appeared to a priest who was taking a nap on the left bank of the Rhone, and to his young cousin in Beaucaire, on the right bank".³ Elsewhere in the literature, in the fireside stories, and in the haunted houses of Renaissance England, one could hear of formless poltergeists, revenants tangible and intangible, ghosts friendly and malevolent, and angels and devils in the guises of dead men. Indeed, the only universal trait which early modern ghosts shared was the trait of eluding any and all forms of strict definition or categorisation.

The treatment of the ghost in everyday England was reflected in the dramatic treatments of ghosts in early modern theatre. In drama, of course, the ghost had a rich classical heritage unrelated to the religious mores of Renaissance England. The apparitions found in the tragedies of Seneca, whose tragedies were first published in English in 1581, had a profound influence upon early depictions of ghosts as pursuers of blood-soaked vengeance, far different to the intercession-seeking spirits of Catholic tradition. While Senecan ghosts provided a template of sorts for dramatizing ghosts, however, the creatures eventually depicted on the Renaissance stage tended to reflect the anxiety between Catholic spiritualism and Protestant scepticism. Ghosts on the early modern stage still functioned on occasion as prologues and choruses, such as Don Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy*, but unlike their Senecan forerunners they

² See Chapter 1 of this thesis, also Catherine Loomis, "Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with text]", *English Literary Renaissance*, 26/3 (September 1996), 482-509, 486.

³ Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 179.

were not confined solely to the periphery of the dramatic action, and often appeared directly to living characters within the central plots of the plays in which they appeared. The greater narrative involvement of ghosts in early modern drama was, however, mitigated by dramatists commonly depicting these visitations in ways which foregrounded a distinctly post-Reformation sense of ambiguity and uncertainty, and gave cause to question the reality of these ghosts as spirits of the dead rather than, for example, dreams, hallucinations, or demonic tricks. Instead of presenting Catholicised meaningful contact between the living and the dead, engagement between these theatrical ghosts and living characters tended to be defined by a sense of communicative frustration indicative of the uneasy socio-religious place of ghosts in contemporary society.

Writing about depictions of Judaism on the Renaissance stage, Stephen Greenblatt suggests that, due to the complete absence of Judaism in early modern England, the abstract figure of the Jew became the very essence of stock villainy – a “useful conceptual tool”, which could signify anything villainous, evil, corrupt or blasphemous.⁴ It seems to me that the figure of the ghost surely underwent a similar process in the cultural imagination. In the same way that everyone *knew* what a Jew was, everyone in attendance would simply *know* what a ghost was, what it represented, what it signified. And what it signified by the late sixteenth century was the tension between a cultural tradition of communicating with the dead, and a new theological order which denied that any such communication could ever take place.

Living-dead interactions and the desire for “conference with the dead”

⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York: Norton, 2004), 259.

Oh, that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the dead!
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here.⁵

These words, uttered by the doomed Duchess on the eve of her execution, recall “an earlier, though not so distant, cultural moment when it was still possible to hold ‘conference with the dead’”.⁶ In his 1999 essay on *The Duchess of Malfi*, Scott Dudley writes that the Duchess’ words here represent nothing less than the palpable “desire – manifested throughout seventeenth-century culture – to have conference with the dead and a past that can only be experienced as rupture”.⁷ Dudley discusses the matter in relation to the taste of the medieval church for saints’ relics (made obsolete, like ghosts, after the Reformation) which combined *Necrophilia and Nostalgia* to the end of communicating, *Conferring*, with the dead. I believe, however, that his observation of the Duchess in the above passage is as relevant – perhaps more so – to a study of theatrical ghosts. The Duchess’ words, after all, echo an unanswered call for knowledge from beyond the grave which defines so many encounters with ghosts in post-Reformation English drama.

Modern scholars have no shortage of material to quench their thirst for knowledge about early modern ghostly encounters. For one, John Newton applies the theories of literary critic Stanley Fish to the various readings that early modern commentators made about apparitions. Fish’s proposal of a shift from an objective model, where the reader passively receives meaning, to one

⁵ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington, et al. (New York: Norton, 2002), 4.2.20-23.

⁶ Scott Dudley, “Conferring with the Dead: Necrophilia and Nostalgia in the Seventeenth Century”, *English Literary History*, 66/2 (Summer 1999), 277-294, 277.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 291.

where the reader is given “the central role in the production of meaning”⁸ has implications, Newton argues, for investigations into how ghosts were analysed:

In this paradigm, those who interpreted the nature of ghosts did not merely play a part in determining meaning, but actively projected or inscribed meaning onto the narratives about ghosts which they encountered.⁹

Simply put, Newton argues, “differing readings of Ghosts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries represented a clash of different theologies, or interpretative orders, the ghost being read from within the perspective of the tradition to which the interpreter belonged”.¹⁰ By this logic, the modern reader may make observations on ghost stories based upon the assumption that early modern witnesses to ghosts saw what their doctrine taught them to see – and one can read their records in light of their theology.

Newton makes an extremely valid point: when approaching a topic as multi-faceted as early modern perspectives on ghosts, the religious divisions between different cultures provide a useful framework which facilitates effective discussions of and comparisons within a complex field. And yet in post-Reformation England, generally speaking, one’s “tradition” was an altogether different influence to one’s theology. The “certain basic presumptions” “conditioned by the world view which their form of Christianity adopted” were themselves preceded by a heritage of medieval Catholic mysticism which survived through the stories told by parents to children.¹¹ As performance theorist Marvin Carlson writes, “the present experience is always ghosted by

⁸ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 7.

⁹ John Newton, “Reading ghosts: early modern interpretations of apparitions” from *Early Modern Ghosts*, ed. Newton (University of Durham: Centre for Seventeenth-Century Studies, 2002) 57-69, 57.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

those which have come before”.¹² Although the newly-formed Church of England struggled gamely to remove all earthly remnants of English Catholicism, no amount of zealous vandalism could hope to banish entirely the memory of the old ways – or the memory of the old ghosts. The new interpretation of Christianity enforced by Protestantism was thus invariably “ghosted”, in Carlson’s terms, by the faith it attempted to displace; haunted, you might say, by the Catholic ghost.

Eliminating the means of communication with the dead, then, did not necessarily eliminate the desire, nor did it remove from English consciousness the memories of times when such communication was part and parcel of day-to-day existence. How else do we explain the Duchess’ nostalgic lament, which demonstrates an attitude incongruous with the time in which the play was written? As Stephen Greenblatt suggests, even as the ghosts of Catholic heritage were “consigned to oblivion” by the Reformation, they began to turn up onstage instead.¹³ And transferred along with the ghosts was the desire which they represented, the desire voiced by the Duchess, the urge of both the living and the dead to interact.

Lines of communication between the living and the dead in medieval England were, as explained in the previous chapter, wide open. In the case of ghosts, it was commonly accepted by medieval Christians that the dead could return to the world of the living in some limited capacity. The pre-Reformation Church taught that ghosts were souls confined to Purgatory, a temporary stage of spiritual transition in which sins were burnt away prior to the soul’s entry to Heaven. Such unhappy spirits could return to the mortal plain in order to obtain

¹² Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2001), 2.

¹³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 151.

spiritual alms (generally in the form of intercessionary prayer) by which their suffering in Purgatory could be alleviated.

The interaction between ghosts and the living took place on several levels, however, and alongside the spiritual method of interaction that was intercessionary prayer, the living and the dead could communicate verbally and physically as well. Most obviously, in terms of appearance, although the forms that revenant spirits could take and the means by which they communicate vary from story to story, ghosts were generally deceased humans¹⁴ – men, women or children – who, in shape at least, mostly resembled “paler and sadder versions of their living selves”.¹⁵ The reason that ghosts appeared in the same form in death as they did in life was often because they rose physically from the grave as revenants. Thus, alongside the fact that ghosts tended to be instantly recognisable, they “frequently”, writes Jo Bath, had “physical presence” as well,¹⁶ to the extent that many ghosts were able to engage with the living in very

¹⁴ Although this chapter exclusively discusses human ghosts and the theatrical performances thereof, stories of visitations by deceased animals were not unknown in medieval and Renaissance England. M.R. James identified one example of ghosts which “ride their own ‘mortuaries’ (the beasts offered to the church, or claimed by it, at their decease)” in his edited Latin text of the Byland Abbey tales (c.1400), while in 1594 Thomas Nashe attacks “old wives tales” of riders pursued by ghostly “wesels and rats, and oftentimes with squirrels and hares”. Even in the Queen’s court, Nashe claims,

they will tell you of a mightie worthie man of this Land; who riding in his Coatch from London to his house, was all the waye haunted with a couple of Hogges, [...] hee caused them to be shut up in a barne, and commanded milke to be given them; the barne dore was lockt, and the key safely kept, yet were they gone by morning, and no man knew how.

There may be at least some connection between the spirits that Nashe mentions and the witches’ familiars described by, among others, King James I. Although not strictly ghosts, familiars were alleged to be evil spirits “in likenes”, according to James I, “of a dog, a Catte, an Ape, or such-like other beast”. See M.R. James, “Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories”, *English Historical Review*, 37/147 (1922), 413-422, 421, n.2, and Thomas Nashe, *The terrors of the night* (London: Printed by John Danter for William Jones, 1594), sig.H; for witches and familiars, see King James I, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh: Printed by Robert Walde, 1597), sig.D2. James I famously refuted the scepticism of Reginald Scot. See Scot, *The discovery of witchcraft* (London: Printed for Andrew Clark, 1665 [originally published 1584]), sigs.A2-A3.

¹⁵ R. C. Finucane, *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead & Cultural Transformation* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996), 81.

¹⁶ Jo Bath, “‘In the Divell’s likenesse’: interpretation and confusion in popular ghost belief”, in John Newton, ed., *Early Modern Ghosts* (University of Durham: Centre for Seventeenth-Century

tangible ways. Ghosts, then, allowed for living-dead interaction that took place on an extremely personal level.

In certain cases, such as when the very corpses of the dead returned to roam about as they did in life, the level of personal interaction proved problematic to the living. M.R. James relates the tale of Robert the Younger, who used to go forth from the grave at night and disturb and frighten local villagers. One night a group of boys gave chase and eventually caught the ghost, whereupon a boy named Robert Foxton held him until the arrival of the parish priest. The priest took the ghost's confession and absolved him, and the ghost went at peace.¹⁷ In this example, initial physical engagement ultimately facilitates spiritual intercession and, ultimately, salvation.

In other cases, however, it was not unknown for physical altercation to replace spiritual intercession altogether. In a village in Brittany, a deceased baker returned to help his wife and children knead dough. When word of his culinary excursions got out, the villagers, presumably outraged at the ghost's flagrant violation of hygiene codes, smashed open the tomb and broke the corpse's legs. While hardly an exercise in subtlety, the mob's techniques nevertheless proved effective, and the ghost did not return.¹⁸ This retroactive punishment enacted upon the baker's corpse has much in common with the methods of posthumous execution frequently carried out in the streets of early modern England,¹⁹ and undoubtedly springs from the same belief in the deep-seated connection between body and soul. To deal with the former (whether through violence or dialogue) would, by extension, affect the latter.

Studies, 2002), 70-78, 74. Medievalist Jean-Claude Schmitt also refers to the corporeality of such apparitions in his seminal *Ghosts of the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 196-200.

¹⁷ James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories", 418.

¹⁸ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 147-8.

¹⁹ See Chapter 1 of this thesis.

The ghost-as-corpse, then, could on occasion be seen as a threat to the living. In other scenarios, however, the connection between ghost and cadaver facilitated posthumous compassion. Deceased lovers, for example, were a common theme in folk ballads of the time, and many contain variations of a refrain in which the dead man pleads with his bereaved sweetheart not to kiss his decaying corpse, for fear of her dying as well:

My lips they are so bitter,
My breath it is so strong,
If you get one kiss of my ruby lips,
Your days will not be long.²⁰

In many recorded cases, living engagement with the ghost's physical form takes on a special significance, not because it poses any inherent danger but because the condition of the corpse correlates directly with its spiritual circumstances. The connection between body and soul appears to have been viewed as something of a two-way street, and in some circles it was believed that the condition of the body upon death influences the soul's passage to the afterlife. This belief led some medieval Christians, notes Schwyzer, to engage in the tradition of the 'Wednesday fast' in the hope that their weekly sacrifice would secure them access to clerical intercession in the event of their death being overly messy or unconventional: "Rhymes reported crushed, drowned, and decapitated fasters calling out for the sacraments",²¹ the desperate cries for the last sacraments indicate fears that a sudden, messy death would not allow the faster the time to properly prepare for the afterlife before their body expired. Stories also exist of corpses that spend their posthumous existence in special circumstances because of the condition of the soul upon death. Caesarius of

²⁰ "The Twa Brothers", in Francis James Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 4 vols. (New York: The Folklore Press, 1957), i: 439.

²¹ Schwyzer, *Archaeologies*, 52.

Heisterbach writes of a dead priest who appeared to an old friend “in broad daylight” with a pale, sallow face, clad in a ragged gown, and was tormented by a fiery chain round his body. He warned his comrade to mend his ways, for this punishment, which appears to have taken a very physical toll on the ghost’s body, was for making a fraudulent confession.²² A more famous case is found in the anonymous fourteenth-century poem *St Erkenwald* in which Londoners laying the foundations for St Paul’s Cathedral unearth a perfectly-preserved human body arrayed in rich, regal clothing. The corpse is able to speak to the attending Bishop Erkenwald, and reveals that in life he was a venerated chief justice from pre-Christian London, who died ignorant of God or his covenant. As a result, he is unable to enter the kingdom of heaven, and lies instead in spiritual and physical limbo. So saddened is Erkenwald by the ghost’s story that he inadvertently baptises the justice with an errant tear, whereupon the corpse joyously announces that the baptism has accomplished its purpose, and his soul was in that very instant set at the Lord’s table. The corpse then promptly decomposed into something “blakke” and “roten” before Erkenwald’s very eyes.²³ In both the case of the priest and the justice we see the condition of the ghost’s body reflecting the condition of its spirit in the afterlife – albeit in two slightly different ways. In the former, bodily emaciation and suffering indicate spiritual torment, while in the latter it is precisely the lack of corruption or outward distress evident in the corpse – which has been rejected by the very earth – that signals the complete rejection of a soul from the afterlife.

²² Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue of Miracles*, bk. 30, trans. H. von E. Scott and C.C. Swinton Bland (London: Routledge, 1929) 24, cited in Finucane, *Ghosts*, 61.

²³ *St Erkenwald*, ed. Clifford Peterson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977). Philip Schwyzer analyses this poem, extracts of which he translates into modern English, as part of a wider discussion on the medieval motif of the uncorrupted corpse. See *Archaeologies*, 45-51.

Medieval ghosts, however, did not always present the connection between corpse and spirit in terms as literal as the dead body rising from the grave. One possible reason that a ghost may reside in Purgatory, after all, was because its body was not granted a Christian funeral. On occasion, then, stories tell of ghosts that have directed living friends or relatives to their unmarked graves in order to obtain a proper burial. In Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*, a murdered young boy's corpse is compelled by the Virgin Mary to sing the *Alma redemptoris mater*, even though his throat is cut to the very "Nekke boone", so that his mother may discover his hidden body and ensure that he receives a full Christian burial.²⁴ Some ghosts, as Roland Finucane points out, were certainly "less tangible than others",²⁵ although even reports of ghosts which return without any suggestion of a corpse commonly describe the revenant as retaining some transcendent physical quality. One such tale, the *Gast of Gy* (c.1323), found widespread fame in poetic form around Europe by the end of the fourteenth century. In it, the disembodied voice of a French man haunts his widow:

he did hir dole both day and night,
 bot of him might scho have no sight;
 and in hir chamber oft might sho here
 mikil noyse and hidos bere.²⁶

Yet although Gy lacks a visible form, the locus of his haunting is identified by his widow as being that bailiwick of physical intimacy, the marital

²⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prioress's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: OUP, 1988) Fragment 7, pages 209-212, lines 453-690; line 649, page 212.

²⁵ Finucane, *Ghosts*, 81.

²⁶ Anon., "Spiritus Guydonis" in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*, vol.2, ed. C Horstman (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1896) 293, lines 51-54, <<http://www.archive.org/stream/yorkshirewriter00horsgoog#page/n6/mode/2up>>, last accessed 10 Jan. 2014. For more on the Gast of Gy, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 105-120.

bed wherein she and her husband once lay.²⁷ Moreover, the local priest who comes to draw out Gy's ghost by reciting scripture in the bedroom is armed with considerably more than just his Bible: he also brings along a pair of scholars and, tellingly, a company of two hundred armed men. The purpose of the priest's academic associates is a matter for debate. As masters of philosophy and geometry respectively, their specialist fields would not appear to lend themselves particularly well to the situation at hand. Perhaps the very fact that they were well-educated was reason enough to assume, like Marcellus does of Horatio, that they were qualified to help deal with the supernatural: "Thou art a scholar; speak to it" (1.1.48).²⁸ Whatever the reason, they play no role in the priest's subsequent interview with Gy. Far more prominent is the small army which accompanies them, "armed ... fra top to ta", guarding every exit against the possibility that the ghost may decide to "aventure" outside the building.²⁹

In medieval Christianity, then, ghosts were a fact of life that could be seen, heard, and felt. Interaction between the living and the dead could be instigated by those on either side of the mortal divide, and engagement with the afterlife was a mere prayer, or perhaps a trip to the graveyard, away. After the Reformation, however, everything changed for the living-dead relationship.

Intercessionary prayer and the related concept of Purgatory – previously integral elements of day-to-day Christian practice – were abolished under the Church of England. And along with the removal of all church-sanctioned

²⁷ "Spiritus Guydonis", lines 79-80 (294): in "pat bed" where "mi lord and I lay in".

²⁸ Theo Brown notes that Wittenberg, the university from which famous graduates include Hamlet, Horatio and Dr Faustus, was known by Scandinavians as the 'Black School' (*Svarti skoli*), and associated with supernatural education. "Remembering that Shakespeare was placing his characters in the world he knew", writes Brown, "it seems hardly surprising that Hamlet should have returned home in [a] somewhat confused state, or that the locals thought Horatio the person best qualified to address a ghost". See Theo Brown, *The Fate of the Dead: A Study in Folk-Eschatology in the West Country After the Reformation* (Ipswich: D.S. Brewer Ltd., 1979), 84.

²⁹ "Spiritus Guydonis", lines 141, 170 (295).

methods of praying *for* the dead, out also went any chance of speaking *with* the dead. Any such attempted interaction with the dead was fruitless in any case, Protestantism argued; the souls of the departed were beyond mortal reach, and the world of the living was beyond theirs. In short, ghosts – that is, Catholic ghosts, from Purgatory and Limbo - were outlawed.³⁰ Clergyman William Perkins outlines the Anglican stance in unequivocal terms:

[That] dead men soe often appear and walke after they are buried [...] is indeede the opinion of the Church of Rome and of many ignorant persons among us: but the truth is otherwise. Dead men doe neither walke nor appeare in bodie or soule after death.³¹

Perkins' reference to the "bodie" refers not only to the outmoded beliefs in revenant corpses, it also recalls the insistence of the Protestant faith in the complete separation upon death of the body from the soul. All Catholic beliefs in the significance of the corpse in relation to the afterlife were replaced with a colder, more clinical take on the matter, devoid of overt affection. "My Body's but the Prison of my Soule", writes John Davies in his 1612 poem *The Muses Sacrifice*.³²

The *Grave* (though wide it gape) dismayes me not,
sith tis the *Gate* of *glory, rest, and peace*:
And though therein my mortall Part must rot,
yet thence it springs with much more faire encrease
(sigs. X2v-X3)

Given that there was, therefore, no method of communication with the afterlife through either spiritual or physical means post-Reformation, the divide between the living and the dead had never seemed greater.

³⁰ See Church of England, *Thirty-nine Articles* (1562) (London: Richarde Jugge and John Cawood, 1571), 14.

³¹ William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge), sig.H2.

³² John Davies, *The muses sacrifice* (London: Printed by T.S. for George Norton, 1612).

The Protestant hard-line was apparently news to the “dead men” in question. As Theo Brown notes, “as time went on it became obvious that the ghosts themselves were oblivious to official opinion and continued to come and go at their own sweet will”.³³ Not only did ghosts continue to haunt post-Reformation England, it does not seem that sightings were restricted to members of the public geographically, or theologically distant from hubs of the new religious establishment. In the late 1570s, for example, Henry Caesar, the vicar of Lostwithiel in Cornwall, observed a conjuror bring back the spirit of deceased Cardinal Pole at the request of Sir Walter Mildmay.³⁴ In 1587, one particular ghost aimed even further up the social spectrum and famously sought an audience with the head of the Church of England herself: Hertfordshire resident Mary Crocker was visited by a ‘bright thing of long proportion without shape, clothed as it were in white silk, which ... passed by her bedside where she lay’ and gave her a warning to deliver to Queen Elizabeth.³⁵ On the one hand the ghost did not appear to mean any harm – quite the opposite, in fact – but on the other hand, as Crocker must have known, the apparition occurred in stark defiance of the very Church which Queen Elizabeth represented. Understandably, ghost sightings caused a great deal of public confusion as newly-converted English Protestants struggled to put aside their old traditions and reconcile themselves to the mandates of the new religious order.

One Protestant solution to the ghost dilemma was the application of simple, elementary scepticism, which saw a great number of ghost stories consigned to the category of human error as writers began to seek out naturalistic explanations for spooky phenomena. Demonstrating the reformist

³³ Brown, *Fate of the Dead*, 19.

³⁴ A.L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall: Portrait of a Society* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1943), 335.

³⁵ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Penguin, 1991; first published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 717, quoting PRO, SP 12/1200, f.65.

tendency towards rationalisation, the theologian and author of one of the most prominent reformist texts on ghosts, Ludwig Lavater attributes many hauntings to pranks by “pleasant & merrie young men, [who] disguise the[m]selves like unto Devils, or else shroud themselues in white sheets”. Perhaps experienced in such matters, Lavater imagines a “usuall and common” situation in which

yong men merily disposed, when they travell by the way,
comming to theyr Inne at night, tye roapes to the bed side, or to
the coverlet or garments, or else hide them selves under the
bed, and so counterfeiting them selves to bee Spirits, deceyve
and mocke their fellows.³⁶

Thomas Nashe takes a similar view in his 1594 treatise *The Terrors of the Night*, but attributes ghost sightings not to the trickery of “merily disposed” young men, but to bad dreams caused by melancholy: “the mother of dreames, and of all terrours of the night whatsoever”, an upset stomach or an overactive imagination: “Anie meate that in the day time we eat against our stomackes, begetteth a dismall dreame”, he notes, while “If a dogge howle” during the night, we suppose in our disturbed slumber that “we are transported into hell, where we heare the complaint of damned ghosts”.³⁷

Here it should be noted that scepticism in the face of ghost stories was hardly a new approach, and neither was it one restricted to reformist scholars. Indeed, even serious-minded Roman Catholics were unafraid to apply even-handed rationality when confronted with hauntings. In one case, the Chateau d’Arsillier in Picardy, France was thought to be haunted by a black demon with horns and a tail. A friend of the owner chased the spectre and shot it, upon which it transformed itself into the local bailiff, who had been attempting to scare

³⁶ Lavater, *Of ghostes*, C3r-C3v.

³⁷ Thomas Nashe, *The Terrors of the Night* (London: John Danter, 1594), Sig. C4v.

away customers by sporting a leather spook costume.³⁸ Whether or not the owner's friend suspected foul play before he shot the apparition remains unclear, but his refreshing pragmatism nevertheless serves to demonstrate a Catholic appreciation of human foibles. Such instances of incredulity were, however, the exceptions to the rule in Catholic Europe. The *Livres des spectres ou apparitions*, written by renowned French lawyer Pierre le Loyer, relate several accounts of contemporary legal cases, which endorsed Papist views on spectres. The explicitly Catholic contents, which included a review of Catholic doctrine on Purgatory, may well have alarmed English Protestants when it was (surprisingly) translated and published in 1605 as *A Treatise of Specters* (the translator courageously dedicated the book to King James I). Loyer's volume, which warns readers early on of the "many and divers kindes of cunning and artificiall devises" by which ghosts may be counterfeited in order to dupe "simple and credulous folkes", but later relates the tale of a man accused of murder who was able to vindicate himself by claiming that the ghost of his wife had visited him and testified in his favour! Helpfully, the ghost also pointed out to her husband the identity of the real killer and "asked ... for revenge", in a distinctly non-Christian manoeuvre.³⁹ While scepticism was occasionally accepted as an approach to hauntings in Catholic nations, then, it seems that the belief in ghosts was still powerful enough to hold sway in matters of importance.

A popular brand of Protestant scepticism, on the other hand, took the extreme view that all reports of hauntings and apparitions were simply the products of human error influenced by superstition and popish mysticism. Of such sceptics, the most outspoken critic of the unfounded superstitions

³⁸ Augustine Calmet, *The Phantom World*, tr. H. Christmas (London: Richard Bentley, 1850), 1.250-2, cited in Finucane, *Appearances*, 96.

³⁹ Pierre le Loyer, *A treatise of spectres* (London: Printed by Val. Simmes for Mathew Lownes, 1605), sigs.T2v, X; case cited in Finucane, 99-100.

dispersed and enforced by both Catholic and Protestant faiths was Reginald Scot. Although Scot was not primarily concerned with ghostly apparitions in his seminal *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), he did devote a chapter to the matter. Initially toeing the standard Protestant line, he ridiculed the “fond and superstitious treatises” of medieval Catholic scholars and also rejected the profane doctrines of the “Sadducees & Peripatetics who denie that there are any Divils or spirits at all”.⁴⁰ Controversially, however, Scot recognised that contemporary Protestant beliefs on the matter were just as laughable: “I for my part have read a number of their conjurations”, Scot remarks of the witches accused by Protestant zealots of raising the dead, “but never could see any devil of theirs, except that it were in a play”.⁴¹

There was, however, a third position that lay between the two extremes of Scot’s outright denial and Loyer’s fervent belief. Many writers began to incorporate ghosts into the new order of things through a careful process of re-categorisation – one officially sanctioned by the Protestant Church. Ghosts *did* exist, the reformists explained, Christians had simply been misinformed as to their true nature. As Lavater explains, ghosts were not the bodies and souls of dead men and women, they were the earthly manifestations of angels and demons. As far as Lavater is concerned, the logic required to come to such a conclusion is very simple. He begins his study by reviewing the official Protestant stance on the afterlife and, as was common practice among early Protestant writers, he puts to task the “Foolishe superstitions” of Catholic mysticism along the way.⁴² Upon death the human soul is fated to one of two “mansions”, he reminds readers, “the one in everlasting fyre, the other in the

⁴⁰ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: Printed for Andrew Clark, 1665 [originally published 1584]), 491.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 443.

⁴² Lavater, *Of Ghosts*, sig.P2v.

everlasting kyngdome”.⁴³ So it is that in *Hamlet* Shakespeare’s Protestant prince can initially conceive of only two possible origins of the Ghost that appears in the shape of his father:

Be thou a spirit of health of a goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable... (1.4.21-26)

The dead cannot wander the earth seeking spiritual alms; there is no Purgatory or Limbo because there can be no “middle or meane place ... other where than with the divell”.⁴⁴ Lavater cites St Augustine frequently throughout and using the example of St Augustine’s mother to substantiate his claim. His message is clear: the living have no more power to influence the fate of the dead than the dead do the living. Therefore, he reasons, if ghosts are not the spirits of the dead then they can only be “Good and evill angels”, and probably more usually the latter: ghostly visions are “nowe so seldome tymes séene ... bycause the Dyvell perceyveth, that wée understande hys subtleties and craft”.⁴⁵

Even between Protestant writers expounding the revised faith, however, there was dissent and disagreement regarding the exact details of said faith. One of the most strongly-opinionated authors was none other than King James I, whose *Daemonologie, in forme of a Dialogue* (1597) comprised “a touchstone of seventeenth-century belief” but was very much “a product of the late-sixteenth-century spiritual environment”.⁴⁶ *Daemonologie* agrees more or less with the general Protestant view of ghosts, but contradicts Lavater at several points. Lavater, for instance, opines that although Satan was capable of creating illusions of the dead, he was powerless to literally raise dead bodies

⁴³ Ibid., sig.B2v.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., sigs.T2v, AAv.

⁴⁶ Finucane, *Ghosts*, 95.

from the grave.⁴⁷ James, on the other hand, believed that not only could Satan and his followers forge spiritual ‘bodies’ for themselves, they could also reanimate and manipulate corpses of the good and bad alike. After all, he reasoned, ghosts may “easily inough open without dinne anie Doore or Window, and enter in thereat”, feats which, logically, they can only achieve “if they have assumed a deade bodie, whereinto they lodge themselves”.⁴⁸ Furthermore, as Finucane observes, James does not once suggest that angels can present themselves in the guise of ghosts: “This seems to leave only Satanic interference to account for the apparitions that troubled the people of his realms”.⁴⁹

Although the disputes between writers are evidence of the burgeoning reformist discourse of ghosts and the important place that ghosts still held in both the religious and cultural imagination of early modern England, disagreements between influential writers reflect a wider division between the Church and the people as far as ghosts were concerned. The ghost problem under Protestantism was, in a nutshell, an issue of interpretation and accommodation. As part of the old Catholic order, apparitions were no more common and no less problematic, but their presence was mitigated by the virtue of the restless dead having a clearly-defined place in the Christian world view. To wit, no matter how troublesome a ghost may have been, the living knew with relative certainty what it was and how it had come to be, and had access to an established set of rules by which they could deal with the ghost accordingly. After the English Reformation, however, those who came across hauntings and other such supernatural occurrences were left without any such religious

⁴⁷ Lavater, *Of ghostes*, sig.Rv.

⁴⁸ James I, *Daemonologie in forme of a dialogue* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1597), sig.lv.

⁴⁹ Finucane, *Ghosts*, 96.

security blanket. There were no rules in place to help everyday men and women deal with ghosts because ghosts themselves were not supposed to exist. And so it was that a number of religious texts attempted to answer the ghost dilemma. Such was the level of public demand that Lavater's *De spectris, lemuribus et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus* (1570), was published in five different languages and ran to at least nineteen early modern editions. The English title of the translated 1572 edition, *Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght, and of strange noyses, crackes, and sundry forewarnynges*, gives a rather clear idea of the sort of superstitious, scared reader that Lavater (or at the very least, his publishers) hoped to attract. The public fear of spirits was sufficiently well-known to be satirised in the late-Elizabethan burlesque *Tarleton's News out of Purgatory* (1590). Confronted by the ghost of the actor Richard Tarleton, he starts back, crying out a typical Protestant address: "*In nomine Jesu*, avoid, Satan, for ghost thou art none, but a very devil. For the souls of them which are departed ... never to return into the world again". Evidently unimpressed, the ghost of Tarlton responds, "Oh there is a Calvinist".⁵⁰

Nothing written on the matter by Lavater, James or their contemporaries was, strictly speaking, theologically canonical, and so doctrinal changes, as Bath notes, "were not uniformly taken up".⁵¹ As a matter of fact, the revised edition of the Church of England's Canon Laws was not completed until 1604, and, as Theo Brown observes, contains "no mention of ghost-laying"

⁵⁰ J. Belfield, "Tarleton's News out of Purgatory (1590): a Modern-spelling edition, with Introduction and Commentary" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 1978), 284.

⁵¹ Bath, "'In the Divell's likenesse,'" 70.

whatsoever.⁵² In a reference to demonic possession, which may be considered a related subject, the clause itself, no.LXXII is worryingly unhelpful.

Neither shall any minister not licensed [i.e. by the Bishop for this express purpose] ... attempt upon pretence whatsoever, either of possession of obsession, by fasting and prayer, to cast out any devil or devils, under pain of the imputation of imposture or cosenage, and deposition from the ministry.⁵³

Since apparitions of any kind were often deemed to be devils come in disguise, Brown continues, "it might be argued that their existence was implied, but clearly no such interpretation is admissible in the actual wording" of the clause, which deals with possession, a totally different subject.⁵⁴ The law was clearly worded to prevent false exorcists and charlatans such as the Jesuit William Weston from roaming the countryside and performing *ad hoc* exorcisms for gullible townsfolk.⁵⁵ As an unhelpful consequence, however, the clause also restricted the ability of genuine priests to assist the victims of hauntings, leaving the laity with a distinct problem. G. Bennett summarises things nicely:

A large number of manifestations, once neutral, had been reclassified as evil, without any equivalent gain on the side of good, at precisely the same time as the Church lessened its own ability to deal practically with supernatural creatures by outward means.⁵⁶

⁵² Brown, *Fate of the Dead*, 18.

⁵³ Edward Cardwell, *Synodalia*, 1842, 287, cited in and translated by Brown, *Fate of the Dead*, 18.

⁵⁴ Brown, *Fate of the Dead*, 18.

⁵⁵ See Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd edn., eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 592-620.

⁵⁶ G. Bennett, "Aspects of supernatural belief, memorate and legend in a contemporary urban environment", unpublished doctoral thesis, Sheffield University, 1985, pp.74-5, cited in Bath, "In the Divell's likeness," 74. Bennett expands upon the lack of aid offered by the clergy in her article of the following year, "Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", *Folklore* 97, 1981.

"It was not until the early part of the eighteenth century", Brown notes, "that sophisticated writers like Daniel Defoe and John Beaumont could boldly observe that since many ghosts came expressly to give good advice or to warn their descendants to desist from evil ways, it was hardly likely that they could be emissaries of Satan" (*Fate of the Dead*, 19). See Daniel Defoe, *A History of Apparitions*, 1738; John Beaumont, *Treatise of Spirits*, 1705, 183.

By the end of the sixteenth century, then, there was only one location where interaction with ghosts was both possible and a regular occurrence: the stage. In the dramatizations of ghosts in Renaissance drama we see reflected the whole gamut of Protestant attitudes towards the spirits of the dead – not least of all the universal fear of the dead. Ghosts are frequently depicted as terrifying creatures, mirroring the fear which theatregoers would themselves have felt at the thought of them. Wittenberg-educated Horatio cannot hide his trepidation when confronted by the ghost of Old Hamlet – “How now, Horatio?” asks Barnardo, “You tremble and look pale” (1.1.61). Hamlet’s initial shock upon seeing the Ghost mirrors the terror of *Tarleton’s Newes*: “Angels and ministers of grace defend us!” (1.4.20). In *Antonio’s Revenge*, the very first words which Antonio addresses to the ghost of his father Andrugio are a plea – “Fright me no more” (3.2.78). The request is repeated again in the very next scene, when Antonio falters in his conviction to kill young Julio, who cries for mercy “For my sister’s sake” (3.3.26), but the cry of “Revenge!” from dead Andrugio is enough to scare Antonio into murderous action: “Stay, stay, dear father, fright mine eyes no more” (3.3.31).

Encounters with ghosts in Renaissance drama are rarely defined entirely by fear, though. More pervasive than terror in the presence of ghosts is a sense of desire – generally on the part of living characters, but occasionally on the part of the deceased also – for more interaction between the living and the dead than is available. If the desire to converse with the dead is commonly depicted as a powerful motivation in Renaissance literature, however, it is almost without exception pitted against and confuted by an equally potent negative force that makes any such dialogue impossible. The Duchess of Malfi yearns for “conference with the dead” but receives only a death sentence; Brutus wishes

to “hold more talk” with the ghost of Caesar, but is unable to; Old Hamlet’s return is cut short when the “glow-worm shows the matin to be near” (1.5.94). Almost without exception, then, we observe the desire for “conference with the dead” played out unsatisfactorily. The ghosts that appear during various plays do not stick around long enough to partake in satisfying discussion with the living – instead, their roles are periphery; their appearances confined to mere cameos. On the one hand, this lack of communication adheres to Protestant expectations concerning living-dead interaction. On the other hand, however, the laments of characters such as the Duchess and Hamlet seem to evoke feelings of nostalgia for the old ways – a desire to once again be able to engage in meaningful, mutually-satisfying discourse with the dead.

Although the tradition of confining ghosts to peripheral roles appears to have grown out of Senecan tragedies such as *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon* in which ghosts function only as prologues, the archetypal example as far as Renaissance tragedy is concerned comes in one of the plays which first popularised the revenge tragedy genre in Elizabethan England, Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* (c.1587). Kyd’s ghost, Don Andrea, who is killed in battle before the play opens, differs from those of Seneca in several minor ways: Andrea functions as both chorus and prologue, for instance, and possesses no apparent foreknowledge of how the story will conclude. However, like Seneca’s tragic ghosts, which, as Geoffrey Bullough observes, do “not interfere in the action” but rather expound the past in a way which “prepares the atmosphere of horror”,⁵⁷ Andrea takes a background role which lends itself to the same principles of personal revenge rather than divine retribution that Seneca’s tragedies were based upon. *The Spanish Tragedy*’s play-within-a-play structure

⁵⁷ Geoffrey Bullough ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 7 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 25.

Few works from the period frame the separation of ghosts from the main action in terms as categorical as *The Spanish Tragedy*, but the communicative divide between living and dead represented by Don Andrea is echoed in several other contemporary plays. In the anonymous *Tragedy of Locrine* (c.1591)⁵⁸ the ghost of Albanact drifts from scene to scene, undetected by the other characters on stage. His imperceptibility is used to darkly comic effect in one particular scene which sees Humber and Hubba, Albanact's living enemies, engage in a dialogue with their deceased foe without realising it:

HUBBA Let come what wil, I mean to beare it out...
 (sig. Fv)

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In many ways the scene is similar to that familiar theatrical device popular in Renaissance drama which sees one figure hidden from the view of others on stage respond to the action in the form of asides, unheard by those other characters. In this sense Albanact's behaviour in this scene may be likened to Hamlet's, as the prince contemplates murdering the kneeling Claudius (3.4.76-99), or Romeo's ruminations as he overhears Juliet on the balcony: "Her eye discourses: I will answer it. / I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks" (2.1.58-9). The difference, however, is that Albanact's comments are not asides to the audience or the vocalisations of internal conflict – they are instead addressed directly to his enemies, whose failure to perceive him is due to the obfuscating properties of a divide far less flimsy than a stage curtain or arras: the veil of death itself. The exchange between the unknowing living and the unheard dead thus acts, like the impermeable barrier between Don Andrea and his friends, as an explicit illustration of the inability of ghosts to fully physically or verbally engage with the living.

Even as this pseudo-conversation between Albanact, Hubba and Humber seems on the one hand to represent the communicative gulf between the living and the dead through the (non-) interaction between characters on stage, on the other hand it functions, somewhat ironically, to forge between the play's living audience and the dead ghost the very sort of living-dead connection which the action of the scene would appear to deny. The scene thus is something of a literary curio, not only in the sense that Albanact is unusually verbose for a ghostly character, but also because of the fact that, given that neither living character on stage can see Albanact, this is an uncommon example of a scene in which the audience view the action from a ghost's perspective and are therefore directly equated with the living dead. The same

may reasonably be said of Don Andrea, who observes the events of *The Spanish Tragedy* in a manner akin to that of a theatregoer, but the differences between the characters of Andrea and Albanact are, I believe, clearly defined. Don Andrea functions in Kyd's tragedy less as a sympathetic figure to whom an audience may relate, but as an admitted "chorus" – that is, a dramatic device who does not interfere with the main action and whose sole purpose is to provide context for Hieronimo's story. Furthermore, any resonance between Andrea and theatregoers is diminished somewhat by the fact that the audience's perspective is also shared by the figure of Revenge, who operates from beyond the realm of death, but is not himself a "ghost" in any real sense. An audience to *The Spanish Tragedy*, then, may be said to view the play not from the perspective of a ghost, but from the perspective of a generalised, distant, classically-inspired afterlife. Moreover, while Albanact's afterlife takes place more or less entirely in view of the audience, the audience of Kyd's tragedy cannot truly be said to share in Andrea's posthumous experience, which is recounted verbally (1.1.1-85) rather than depicted with any kind of palpable immediacy.

Unlike Andrea, Albanact is not an ineffectual chorus or the subject of a play-within-a-play framing device, but a character who exists within the same world as the living, as demonstrated by his slapping food out of Strumbo's hand in 4.3, and his persistence in haunting Humber for seven years. His placement within the central action, however, is precisely what allows his perspective to overlap with that of the outside observers, the audience. Albanact's afterlife is not merely recounted in an introductory monologue like Andrea's, it takes place before our very eyes and we share in it. Albanact even soliloquises – a rarity for stage ghosts – on two occasions (at the ends of 4.3 and 4.5), speaking directly

to the audience. As it pertains to Albanact's intrusion in the conversation between the unwitting Humber and Hubba, in Albanact's act of speaking but remaining unheard by his enemies he and the audience occupy the same observational space, being the only ones who perceive the entire exchange. For a fleeting moment the audience *become* ghosts, sharing Albanact's living dead perspective. The effect is compounded by the fact that Hubba and Humber are clear-cut antagonists, making Albanact's ghost the only sympathetic character on stage. In its creation of a bond between on-stage ghost and off-stage audience that transgresses conventional audience / character relationships this scene is a true rarity in the early modern corpus.

Where communication – verbal or otherwise – between living and dead characters is explicitly depicted rather than denied in early modern drama, it is frequently presented as brief and unfulfilling, and usually ambiguous in terms of the ghost's message, its presence, or both. Frequently we see the ghost's appearance placed in doubt, with ghosts commonly encountered in scenes that provide possible alternative non-supernatural explanations for their appearances. In several cases they present themselves to living characters whose powers of perception are in some way compromised. In such instances, what little interaction there may be between living characters and ghosts is diminished by the implication that the ghost in question may be a hallucination, or an otherwise imaginary creation. The most famous example is Banquo's posthumous appearance at Macbeth's banquet. Early on in the play Macbeth demonstrates that he is susceptible to hallucinations when weighed down by guilt or doubt – on the way to Duncan's chamber he encounters a "dagger of the mind" which he attributes to his "heat-oppressèd brain": "It is the bloody business which informs / Thus to mine eyes" (2.1.45-6, 55-6). Therefore, when

Macbeth is later confronted by the ghost of Banquo, the man whose murder Macbeth had masterminded, it is questionable whether the ghost is actually present at all. Not only does Banquo's ghost remain silent, compounding the sense of uncertainty surrounding its presence, but what seems to Macbeth to be a real and present danger – "Hence, horrible shadow! / Unreal mock'ry, hence!" (3.4.122-3) – is invisible to everyone else present onstage. The implication is that the ghost may be the product of Macbeth's own ravaged conscience rather than a supernatural phenomenon: "When all's done", Lady Macbeth admonishes her husband, "You look but on a stool" (3.4.77-8).

Likewise, in John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) Francisco echoes Lady Macbeth's dismissal of ghosts as products of a tormented mind. While Macbeth's sighting of Banquo is labelled "the very painting of ... fear", however, Francisco attributes the ghost of his dead sister Isabella to his melancholy disposition. The apparition (identified as "*Isabella's ghost*" by Webster's stage directions at 4.2.99) appears as Francisco closes his eyes to imagine Isabella's presence, and thus in the scene's staging alone Isabella's ghost would appear to exist somewhere between the realms of the imaginative and the supernatural. Francisco's reaction, too, lends itself to either interpretation: on the one hand he openly intends to cast an imaginary image of Isabella, to frame "in a melancholic thought ... / Her figure 'fore me" (4.2.98-9). On the other hand, though, he is shocked at how realistic the apparition seems. "How strong / Imagination works!" he exclaims, "How she can frame / things which are not!" (4.2.99-101). Such is the seeming tangibility of the apparition that Francisco wonders against his better judgement whether it may be the genuine article. He assures himself that "Thought, as a subtle juggler, makes us deem / Things supernatural which have cause / Common as sickness", and yet he cannot help

himself from addressing the ghost directly: “How cam’st thou by thy death?” (4.2.107) Francisco immediately reprimands himself for being duped by his own creation – “How idle am I / To question mine own idleness?” (4.2.107-8) – and he banishes the ghost before he can find out whether or not Isabella would have answered. Francisco’s parting words to the apparition provide an insight into Francisco’s mind which lend the ghostly encounter an air, not of imagination, but of Catholic recusancy: “What have I to do / With tombs, or deathbeds, or funerals, or tears ...?” But whether that signifies that the ghost is real or not is another matter. It is possible, after all, to infer from the fact that Francisco is able to dismiss the ghost from the scene by dismissing it from his mind – “Out of my brain with’t!” (4.2.110-111) – that Isabella’s ghost is predominantly an imaginary construct, like the melancholic “dreams” described by Nashe.

Elsewhere in early modern drama we are presented with other reasons to doubt the reality of ghostly manifestations, either because their presence is explained as an illusion of some kind, or because they appear to percipients on the verge of sleep, and may thus be explained away as dreams. In several of Shakespeare’s most famous works, depicted apparitions of the dead possess a dreamlike quality. The ghost of Caesar appears to Brutus as the latter is beset by “murderous slumber” (*Julius Caesar*, 4.2.357): “I think it is the weakness of mine eyes / That shapes this monstrous apparition” (4.2.366-7). Similarly, the fifth act of *Richard III* sees both Richard and Richmond visited by a myriad of deceased friends, victims and relatives while the two men sleep. These ghosts, unlike those of Banquo or Caesar, have a great deal to say to both men, but their visits to sleeping Richard and Richmond are interpreted by the two men as a “dream” caused by the “coward conscience” (5.3.182-3) in the case of the

former, and as the “fairest-boding dreams / That ever entered in a drowsy head” (5.3.229-30) in the case of the latter. That the apparitions are mere dreams is far from a foregone conclusion: it was, after all, believed in early modern superstition that strangely-burning lights indicated the presence of ghosts, and Brutus and Richard both note, before and after their respective ghosts have come and gone, that their candles burn strangely. Richard’s “lights burn blue” (5.3.184), and Brutus’ taper burns “ill” (4.2.365). Shakespeare thus provides some evidence to suggest that in these scenes the dead truly are attempting to communicate with the living. In these instances, however, there is just as much reason to believe that the presence of ghosts actually occludes the possibility of the posthumous interaction by demonstrating instead the power of the “coward conscience” and “murderous slumber”.

Although examples suggesting that ghosts may be creations of an imaginative internal force are frequent in the drama of the English Renaissance, there are also instances in which we see spirits of the dead presented as explicitly non-imaginary phenomena. In these instances, however, the presence of non-imaginary apparitions does not necessarily facilitate meaningful exchanges between the living and the dead. In *The Tempest*, Prospero claims to possess power enough that “graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let ‘em forth / By my so potent art” (5.1.53-5). Despite this open admission that such living-dead contact is possible, however, the only apparitions that he summons during the course of the play are images of classical gods and pastoral memes – nymphs, Naiads and “sunburned sicklemen” in “rye-straw hats” (4.1.146-8). As Greenblatt notes, then, the shapes summoned by Prospero are “not the souls of the dead but something

less ominous”,⁵⁹ a matter clarified in the exchange between Prospero and Ferdinand: “May I be bold / To think these spirits?” Ferdinand enquires.

“Spirits”, Prospero confirms,

which by mine art
I have from their confines called to enact
My present fancies. (4.1.118-22)

That the play features a magician in command of such spirits at all is proof enough that Shakespeare has no objection to presenting supernatural activities *per se*. Prospero’s words here, however, read as a calculated removal on Shakespeare’s part of the dead and the living from one another – an overt dismissal of Ferdinand’s implicit suggestion that Prospero’s activities might constitute necromancy. This scene’s careful separation of unacceptable and acceptable concepts – of ghosts from the merely ghost-like – mirrors a similar scene in an earlier play, Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (c.1594), in which Faustus conjures up at the request of a German Emperor the shapes of long-dead Alexander and his paramour. Although the two apparitions are convincing enough that the Emperor believes them to be “the true substantial / bodies of those two deceased princes” (4.1.68-9), Faustus dispels the idea that these figures could be the genuine articles. Faustus is unable to resurrect “the true substantial bodies” because they “long since are consumed to dust” (4.1.46-7). What Faustus presents instead is, like Prospero’s magic trick, a mere illusion performed by “such spirits as can lively resemble Alexander and / his paramour” (4.1.50-1) and not, crucially, the ghost of Alexander, who remains inaccessibly entombed in “vaults below” (4.1.34). This illusion Greenblatt takes one step further: Faustus is not merely unable to conjure the dead bodies, but

⁵⁹ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 259.

instead purposefully conjures lookalike spirits to perform a dumb show in order to control and set conditions on this moment of living-dead interaction.⁶⁰

In cases in which living characters are confronted by ghosts, which one may reasonably perceive as objectively present rather than the products of hallucinations, dreams, or a ghost-like illusion conjured by magic, interaction may eventually take place, although this interaction may not be what the living characters were hoping for. In the example of Albanact, unlike Don Andrea he is eventually acknowledged by the living – in this case by Humber. And yet for all of his loquaciousness in the earlier scenes when he was unheard, on this sole occasion upon which Andrugio's "wandring ghost" is able to confront his foe he speaks with uncharacteristic abruptness, uttering only that most common of ghostly refrains, "Revenge, revenge for blood".⁶¹ Humber, for his part, accepts that Andrugio is "fearfull to behold" but remains unintimidated: "when as I die, ile dragge thy cursed ghoast / Through all the rivers of foule Erebus",⁶² he threatens, before exiting and putting the brief dialogue to an end. Even as their presence on stage suggests an unquashed desire to speak with the dead, the ways in which ghosts are so often depicted in drama serves only to highlight the fruitlessness of that desire.

To return to the Duchess' desire for "conference with the dead", then, I suggest that we may read in her words a calculated cynicism on Webster's part as it pertains to the accessibility of living-dead communications. The sequence of events, which sees the Duchess desire to speak with the dead before she herself becomes one of the dead, finds its natural counterpoint in the later scene in which Antonio and Delio enter the Duchess' grave. As Antonio speaks,

⁶⁰ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 155-6.

⁶¹ Anon., *Locrine*, sig. G.

⁶² Ibid, sig. Gv.

his words are returned to him by a very selective echo from the grave, an echo which subtly changes the meaning of his own words to warnings, and sounds, he observes, “very like my wife’s voice” (5.4.28). The voice “that many have supposed ... is a spirit” (5.3.8) is, we are led to believe, the Duchess’ ghost, attempting to save her husband from beyond the grave by offering him the same conference with the dead that she herself was denied. That her ghost speaks only by echo, however, casts enough doubt on her spiritual presence that Antonio, despite engaging in a dialogue with his late wife, “marked not one repetition of the echo” but the last, and any concern he may feel over the sole echo he heard is quickly dismissed by Delio as “Your fancy, merely” (5.3.47, 50). Heedless of the echo’s advice that Antonio “fly [his] fate” (5.3.39), he leaves, and marches directly to his death. The message that appears in this scene is simple, but sums up neatly the relationship between ghosts and the living in early modern drama in general: where the living desire “conference with the dead”, Webster tells us, it is denied; and where that conference *does* occur, it invariably comes to nought.

With the backdrop set, of early modern Catholic-Protestant religious divisions about the presence of ghosts, as well as ongoing desires to communicate with the dead, I will now turn my attention to the highly-visible ghosts of Marston’s 1602 tragedy, *Antonio’s Revenge*. As I have discussed thus far in this chapter, ghosts were commonplace on the Renaissance stage and either facilitated living-dead interaction between the ghost-audience or ghost-actors, or remained silent or periphery to the action onstage. In *Antonio’s Revenge*, ghosts are of the former camp, however, as we shall see, Marston’s play is far from conventional.

Chapter 4

Antonio's Revenge: The Metatheatrical Ghost

John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1602), the sequel to his comedy of the same year *Antonio and Mellida*, has long been the subject of debate. Described by Rick Bowers as "Rude, crude, and theatrically unglued",¹ Marston's revenge tragedy consistently overleaps boundaries of convention, expectation and taste in ways which have divided critical opinion as to what exactly the play sets out to achieve: should *Antonio's Revenge* remain consigned to what Barbara Baines elegantly terms "the dustbin of bad drama"?² Or do its various absurdities and eccentricities constitute a cunning satire on contemporary theatrical and social tropes? Although I do not propose that a study of the ghosts of *Antonio's Revenge* will put the debate to rest once and for all, I do, however, argue that throughout the play Marston establishes a clear relationship between the appearances of ghostly characters and glaring shifts in his play's tonal register. Specifically, ghosts – primarily the recurring figure of Andrugio – appear to both signpost and facilitate a distinctly metatheatrical undercurrent designed to entertain and emotionally unsettle that audience in equal measure.

Metatheatre, as coined by Lionel Abel, reflects "comedy and tragedy, at the same time, where the audience can laugh at the protagonist while feeling empathetic simultaneously",³ or indeed, where the audience can feel simultaneously disturbed and entertained by a character. However, the term can and has been expanded to refer to a self-awareness within a play of its own

¹ Rick Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe': the 'Antonio' plays", *The Drama of John Marston*, ed. T.F. Wharton (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 14-26, 15.

² Barbara J. Baines, "*Antonio's Revenge*: Marston's Play on Revenge Plays", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23/2 (Spring 1983), 277-294, 278.

³ Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), 65.

theatricality. Indeed, in a later work, A. J. Boyle reads in *Antonio's Revenge* a successful application of metatheatre, with its numerous dumb shows, and moments such as Piero at the end of Act 2 fashioning himself as a Senecan tragic actor – in other words a Renaissance actor playing the character of an actor *who is also playing a character*, in a play that Boyle reads as Senecan.⁴ There is something intensely and innately theatrical about the figure of the ghost in the early modern imagination, and in the same way that ghosts are seen to cross the boundary between life and death, Marston uses them as key components in his rebuttal of expectations, in his subversion of the boundaries between tragedy and comedy, actor and audience. Marston's tragedy thus conveys a far more complex social commentary than it has hitherto been given credit for.

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There are two kinds of “ghost” which may be discussed in relation to *Antonio's Revenge*: the first are the literal, living dead ghosts which occur in various forms throughout Marston's play, primarily in the form of Andrugio, Marston's ‘Old Hamlet’-type figure. The second type of ghost is figurative – the discursive spectre of a notable decades-old debate, primarily between R. A. Foakes and Richard Levin, which took place in the pages of *Essays in Criticism* and has “ghosted” (in Marvin Carlson's sense of the word) discussions of *Antonio's Revenge* ever since.⁵ This figurative ghost of the Levin / Foakes debate has to date, I suggest, haunted every discussion of *Antonio's Revenge* that has

⁴ A. J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), see especially 199-200.

⁵ See R. A. Foakes, “Mr. Levin and ‘Good Bad Drama’”, *Essays in Criticism*, 22/3 (1972), 327-329, and Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2001), 2.

focused in any great length on the many jarring narrative and thematic inconsistencies of Marston's tragedy. The actual ghosts of the play itself, on the other hand, have been largely overlooked in critical discussion, presumably because the weight of critical attention on the play's "big picture" – that is, on whether or not the abundant erratic elements were intentional parts of Marston's design or not – has distracted modern readers from the play's finer nuances.

The absence, however, of ghosts from the critical forum does not necessarily correlate with the significance of ghostly characters to both the events of Marston's tragedy and to a modern understanding of it. In this study I argue that although the literal ghosts of *Antonio's Revenge* remain virtually unmentioned in discussions responding to Foakes' and Levin's discursive ghost, the two are in actual fact closely related – and, indeed, they are impossible to separate. It is at the very points during the play at which bizarre shifts in tonal register are most apparent that the ghosts of Andrugio and Feliche, and the mock-ghost presented by Balurdo, appear – and the presence of these living dead characters is integral to the play's most glaring deconstructions of notions of theatrical convention and narrative cause-and-effect. By using ghosts as tools of metatheatre, *Antonio's Revenge* also inverts the usual conventions concerning depictions of ghosts in early modern drama, and instead shifts the role that ghostly characters are usually assigned from the periphery to the very centre of the dramatic action. In Marston's tragedy, ghosts interact with and engage in the living world in ways unlike those of the ghosts depicted in any of the dramatic works discussed in this thesis so far.

First, however, the terms of the initial Foakes / Levin debate from which most subsequent criticism of *Antonio's Revenge* sprung should be made explicit. The exchange stemmed in earnest from a 1962 essay by Foakes in

which the latter suggested that “parody and a sardonic or grotesque humour were predominant in the playwright’s conception” of Marston’s obscure tragedy, “and much of the so-called clumsiness, nonsense, and bad writing are there for deliberate effect”.⁶ The elements of *Antonio’s Revenge* which had for so long been considered glaring errors and inconsistencies in Marston’s writing, Foakes argued, were actually evidence of a sustained parody of the revenge tragedy genre and of the acting styles used by adult performers. A decade later, however, Levin launched a rebuttal against Foakes’ notion that one may realistically attribute to confusing, disjointed plays such as *Antonio’s Revenge* “an irony so ineffective that it escaped notice until now”.⁷ Apologists for Marston’s much maligned tragedy and other inferior dramatic works were, Levin argued, simply contributing to the proliferation of “Good Bad Drama”.⁸

The question of whether or not *Antonio’s Revenge* is bad drama or “Good Bad Drama” may have officially concluded in *Essays in Criticism* with an article by T. F. Wharton which supported Levin’s stance that, satiric or not, a work of such “wholesale repetitiveness” as *Antonio’s Revenge* could not be considered an artistic success,⁹ but the argument itself has since enjoyed a remarkable afterlife. Indeed, subsequent studies of the play have, almost without exception, been haunted by the ghost of that initial critical debate.¹⁰

⁶ R. A. Foakes, “John Marston’s Fantastical Plays: *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio’s Revenge*” *Philological Quarterly*, 41/1 (1962), 229-239, 238.

⁷ Richard Levin, “The New New Inn and the Proliferation of Good Bad Drama”, *Essays in Criticism*, vol. 22/1 (1972), 41-47, 46. See also Foakes’ rebuttal to Levin’s critique, “Mr. Levin and ‘Good Bad Drama’” *Essays in Criticism*, 22/3 (1972), 327-329, 328.

⁸ One of the only surviving contemporaneous references to *Antonio’s Revenge* comes from Ben Jonson, who deemed the play “barren trash” in his 1601 satire *The Poetaster* (5.3.373). It is possible that Jonson’s insult is nothing more than one of many volleys fired during his personal and professional rivalry with Marston. On the other hand, it is perhaps revealing that Jonson apparently believed that his audience would appreciate the barb – which would indicate that, as Levin suggests, Marston’s play was commonly held to be a failure.

⁹ T.F. Wharton, “Old Marston or New Marston: the *Antonio Plays*”, *Essays in Criticism*, 25 (1975), 357-69, 358.

¹⁰ Which is not to say that the studies have been great in number: perhaps due to the play’s poor reputation, there have been alarmingly few in comparison to the multitude of books and

Many have shared Levin's view that *Antonio's Revenge* is fundamentally flawed. George Geckle, for example, takes issue with the "especially confused or perverse" final act of the play in his 1980 monograph on Marston's drama. W. Reavley Gair endorses a more sympathetic view of the play with his suggestion that the time for its performance revival is "long overdue", but notes that *Antonio's Revenge* may be best appreciated by a modern audience as "a parody of *Hamlet*", a play "dramatically incomparably superior" to Marston's.¹¹ More recently, criticism has moved overwhelmingly towards the Foakesian view that Marston's play operates within a zone of self-conscious metatheatre. Barbara Baines interprets the drama as a "play about plays, specifically revenge tragedies and the moral and aesthetic problems of the artist who contributes to this convention".¹² Jadwiga S. Smith echoes both Baines and Philip Ayres' 1972 interpretation of *Antonio's Revenge* "as a parodictic [*sic*] exposure of the amorality of the Kydian revenger"¹³ when she speaks of Marston's "master plan"¹⁴ to perpetuate, in "the absence of characters and plot rooted in causality, of even remotely consistent feeling of tone", a unity of tone rooted in aesthetic discomfort, in wrong-footing his audience and expectations of dramatic predictability. In this, Smith argues, Marston launches a satirical attack on the ideas of stoicism and revenge celebrated by other contemporary revenge tragedies. Jonathan Dollimore grants pride of place to *Antonio's Revenge* as a capital *R* "Radical Tragedy" based on what he sees as the play's insistent

essays written each year about Marston's better-known works or Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the contemporary work to which *Antonio's Revenge* is often compared.

¹¹ George L. Geckle, *John Marston's Drama: themes, images, sources* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1980), 81; in W. Reavley Gair, Introduction to John Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, ed. Gair (Manchester: MUP, 1999 [first printed 1978]), 1-48, 39-40.

¹² Baines, "Antonio's Revenge", 294.

¹³ Philip J. Ayres, "Marston's Antonio's Revenge: The Morality of the Revenging Hero", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 12/2 (Spring, 1972), 359-374, 359.

¹⁴ Jadwiga S. Smith, "Exploring Aesthetic Discomfort in the Experience of the Comic and the Tragic: John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*" from Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka ed., *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*, vol. LVI (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 127-136, 131.

breakdown of coherent human subjectivity and displacement of comfortable providentialism.¹⁵ Similarly, Phoebe S. Spinrad considers the play a “dazzling display” of “innovative stagecraft” which functions to sacralise the imagery of revenge through using a series of Judaeo-Christian visual metaphors to “sacrilize [*sic*] the pagan” concept of vengeance.¹⁶ Even these most recent post-modern interpretations of Marston’s tragedy are, however, Janus-faced, and look forward with bold and progressive readings even as they unavoidably look backwards as well, unable to exorcise the ghosts of Foakes, Levin and Good Bad Drama.

In none of the aforementioned studies, however, are the theatrical ghosts which inhabit Marston’s tragedy given anything more than a cursory glance. Perhaps the reason for their absence from current discourse is because the ghosts of *Antonio’s Revenge* are not, on the surface at least, drastically different from the majority of those found anywhere else in Renaissance drama. Although one might argue that Marston is at odds with contemporary socio-political status quo in his depiction of ghosts in an explicitly Christian Venice, Marston was certainly not the only playwright to depict classically-inspired ghosts in a Christian setting as the examples outlined earlier in this chapter demonstrate. His usage of them here is therefore nothing out of the ordinary. Furthermore, on several occasions ghosts are invoked only so that ideas of living/dead interaction can be dismissed. Two “meager ghosts” appear in the context of a dream (1.3.43): an explanation that would have been familiar to Protestant ghost-sceptics such as Nashe and Lavater, and during the clandestine funeral of Feliche, the standard Protestant belief in the inability of

¹⁵ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

¹⁶ Phoebe S. Spinrad, “The Sacralization of Revenge in *Antonio’s Revenge*”, *Comparative Drama*, 39/ 2 (Summer 2005), 169-186: 183, 182.

the dead to speak with the living becomes the subject of dark humour. “Will’t sing a dirge, boy?” Antonio asks a young page as the grave is dug. Pandulpho and Alberto deliberately misunderstand him and assume that Antonio is alluding ironically to the dead Feliche:

PANDULPHO: No; no song; ‘twill be vile out of tune.
ALBERTO: Indeed he’s hoarse; the poor boy’s voice is cracked.
(4.5.65-8)

Although the black humour of this joke seems at odds with the melodramatic tone of the rest of the scene, there is certainly nothing overtly satirical or “Radical” about the message these lines convey regarding the inaccessibility of the dead. As mentioned above, references to ghosts, which raise the idea of living-dead interaction only so that the same idea may be rejected, were commonplace in Renaissance tragedy. Pandulpho’s comment presents a bleakly comic, sober counterpoint to his earlier insistence while in a frenzy of grief, that he can “hear a humming murmer creep / From out [Feliche’s] gellied wounds” (2.2.10-11). Pandulpho’s acceptance of that silence in act four marks a rejection of the desire for superstitious posthumous communication, and serves to remind the audience only of the barrier between the living and the dead. There is a poignant finality in his and Alberto’s remarks reminiscent of nothing so much as Hamlet’s observations in the graveyard at Elsinore: “That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once” (5.1.57). On the surface, then, there appears to be very little to differentiate the majority of instances of interaction between the living and the dead in *Antonio’s Revenge* from any other Protestant-tinged, sceptical depiction of living-dead interaction in early modern English drama.

The ghosts of *Antonio's Revenge* do, on the other hand, take on fresh significance if we look at them in terms of metatheatre – specifically the type of Marstonian metatheatre that Rick Bowers identifies as a uniquely satirical subversion of contemporary popular theatre.¹⁷ Bowers argues that Marston's satirical technique, and therefore his approach to dramatic conventions, is always to break down or undermine that which is expected. It is an approach identified, Bowers observes, in the description from the Cambridge frolic *The Return from Parnassus, Part 2* of Marston's well-known nom de plume "Monsieur Kinsayder": according to the text, "Kinsayder" is one who "Cutts, thrusts, and foines at whomsoever he meets, / ... and at first volly of his Cannon shot / Batters the walles of the old fustie world".¹⁸ Marston's oddities throughout the play, Bowers suggests, are exactly that: a "Cannon shot" aimed at the fustie walls of dramatic convention. They are self-conscious "theatrical assertions" representing Marston's determination to "surprise, entertain, and emotionally unsettle" his audience by juxtaposing the comic and the tragic, the appropriately theatrical and the unconventionally self-aware, in ways which appear confusing to modern readers.¹⁹ Piero, Bowers observes, certainly has one eye on the audience in self-conscious realization as, having just defamed his daughter and murdered both Andrugio and Feliche, he feigns grief:

Dead! alas, how dead?
 [Aside] Fut, weep, act, feign.

Gives seeming passion

Dead! alas, how dead?

¹⁷ Rick Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe': the 'Antonio' plays", in T. F. Wharton, ed., *The Drama of John Marston* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 14-26.

¹⁸ J.B. Leishman, *The Return of Parnassus, Part 2*, in *The Three Parnassus Plays* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1949), 241-2 and 273-84, cited in Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe'", 72. Bowers regularises all the *i/j* and *u/v* reversals in his citation.

¹⁹ Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe'", 19, 17.

In another such instance, Andrugio's funeral, a dark and sombre masque, gives way to a strange metatheatrical joke in which the actor playing the foolish Balurdo apparently misses his cue and dashes on stage with his beard "halfe off, halfe on". "The tying man", he reveals, "hath not glued on my beard half fast, enough" (2.1.30-31). Viewed by Bowers' logic, then, strange scenes such as these which appear to defy the accepted norms and fashions of Marston's contemporary theatre become not symptoms of poor writing but examples of Marston's employment of ironic techniques as part of an overriding "theatrical self-consciousness".²⁰ By extension, *Antonio's Revenge* becomes not simply, as Baines theorised, a play on revenge plays: it becomes an M.C. Escher-esque perspective trick; a deliberate exercise in simultaneous inflation and deflation of possibilities designed to confound theatregoers' shared sense of theatrical pattern recognition. In short, Marston uses the terms by which his audience come to understand the play as they experience it against them, turning expectation on its head in order to shock and surprise.

Ghosts are, I suggest, at the centre of the metatheatrical environment that Marston creates. If we analyse the ghosts which appear in *Antonio's Revenge* through this lens of metatheatre, we may observe that they tend to be involved in the very sort of "frantic theatrical self-realization" described by Bowers,²¹ undercutting narrative cohesiveness and drawing attention to the mechanics of performance in order to disorient the audience. The most

²⁰ Ibid., 16. See also Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005). Munro also reads a metatheatrical self-consciousness in the plays performed by the boys' company Children of the Queen's Revels, in which overt references are made to actors' youth.

²¹ Ibid.

significant moments of living/dead interaction are those moments during the play at which Marston elicits audience expectations only to subvert them.

Ghosts do not actually feature on stage until the spirit of Andrugio appears in the third act, but from the offset haunt the language and the events of the play, and are associated with various narrative inversions – not least of all the abrupt shift in tone between the earlier play *Antonio and Mellida*, and *Antonio's Revenge*. In the Prologue Marston paints the transition from comedy to tragedy as an organic, almost pastoral process, in line with the changing of the seasons from summer's "soft and delicate aspects" to the "naked shudd'ring branch" of winter (Prologue, 5-6). In practice, however, the transition from comedy to tragedy that Marston offers his audience is far from smooth – something that becomes apparent in the very first speech of the tragedy when Duke Piero invokes "meager ghosts ... and black thoughts" (1.1.8) to introduce a complete inversion of the comic resolution of *Antonio and Mellida*. It transpires that Piero remains a villain and he poisoned Andrugio with the very drink of "health" he offered at the close of the previous play (sig. l4r).

Two scenes later, Antonio also refers to "Two meager ghosts" (1.3.42), which he claims appeared to him in "horrid dreams" (1.3.39), and which come to signify another revision of the previous play's events in that Antonio, who recognises the ghost that "assumed my father's [Andrugio's] shape" (1.3.45), does not appear to recognise the ghost of Feliche, despite the fact that Antonio and Feliche were well acquainted in *Antonio and Mellida*. Instead, Antonio refers simply to "The one" whose breast seemed "fresh-paunched with bleeding wounds" (1.3.43). It is possible that Antonio, distracted by the "bubbling gore" (1.3.44) does not recognise his friend's spirit, much in the same way that he does not appear to recognise Feliche's corpse ("What villain bloods the window

of my love?" [1.1.130]), but there are no clues in the text to indicate that this might be the case. Indeed, although the corpse may be "*thick with wounds*", Piero's design requires that Feliche is identifiable so that he may hang "But as a bait upon the line of death" (1.1.16).

If "meager ghosts" signpost the inter-play subversion of *Antonio and Mellida's* comedy by the tragedy of *Antonio's Revenge*, those ghosts are also subverted by a jarring undercurrent of dark comedy. Piero's opening speech in which he describes the depths of his "topless villainy" (1.1.84) takes a turn for the comical when his henchman Strotzo enters the scene. Not only does Strotzo's entrance neatly contradict Piero's assertion that the only creatures in the vicinity are "meager ghosts, Piero, and black thoughts", but Strotzo's repeated attempts to speak only to be interrupted and insulted by the domineering Duke inject humour into a scene which, by rights, should contain none. Similarly, the fool Balurdo comically deflates the serious tone set by Antonio's melodramatic description of the "dire prodigies" that accompanied his ghostly visitations during the night - fire in the sky, a "blazing comet" and his nose which "straight bled" (1.3.52-59) by relating his own nonsensical dream in response. In this dream, Balurdo claims, he was been visited by *three* ghosts, "the abominable ghost of misshapen Simile", "Master *Even-as*", and "Mounser *Even-so*" (1.3.64-6), at which point he "bewrayed the fearfulness of my nature" (that is, he soiled himself), started up, "called for a clean shirt" and ate "a mess of broth" (1.3.68-70).

Where "meager ghosts" occur in the first act of *Antonio's Revenge*, then, they accompany and facilitate instances where tragedy and comedy bleed into one another in ways which seem designed to wrong-foot Marston's audience. It would be incorrect to suggest that such theatrical subversion necessarily

requires the presence of a ghost on stage or in the language – there are, after all, several instances of tonal confusion during the play from which ghosts are altogether absent, such as the aforementioned mystery of Balurdo’s beard in 2.1. I do suggest, however, that the pairing of ghosts with dramatic inversions through speech alone in the opening act anticipates the jarring tonal shifts that occur after Andrugio’s ghost takes physical presence later in the play.

When Andrugio returns to incite Antonio to revenge, he initiates a number of subsequent shifts in register from po-faced melodrama to dark, subversive humour. These shifts are signposted by interactions between the living and the dead in which audience expectations are established and immediately undercut. The spectral wrong-footing begins with the first on-stage appearance of Andrugio’s ghost. Immediately prior to the ghost’s appearance, Antonio takes pains to differentiate between the locations of his father’s corpse and his father’s immortal soul. Although there is an undeniable whiff of Catholic recusancy in the way that Antonio seems to venerate the gravesite (“Cold flesh, bleak trunks, wrapped in your half-rot shrouds, I press you softly with a tender foot” [3.1.10-11]), he ultimately takes the standard Protestant line and separates his “cold father’s cheek” in “Most honoured sepulchre” (3.1.15, 12) from the “royal spirit of Andrugio, / Where’er thou hover’st” (3.1.17-18). The former he presses “softly, with a tender foot” (3.1.11), and the latter he must “heave up tapers to” (3.1.19). The entire speech, however, is misdirection: Antonio diverts our attention to what is above – to a vision on the heavenly “orb” in which Andrugio’s “mighty spirit soars” (3.1.27) – and Andrugio’s ghost instead “Forsakes his coffin” and rises from below (3.1.32).

Given the seeming allusions to differing Christian theologies of the afterlife inherent in the scene, one might infer that the ghost’s entrance presents

something of a Catholic resurgence into a Protestant worldview, but although this may be the case one should not reduce the scene to a simple theological commentary. As Greenblatt argues, Andrugio represents in his language and his thirst for revenge a style of ghost “manifestly classical rather than Catholic” and as such it is unlikely that Andrugio’s primary purpose was to arouse, outwardly at least, any specific theological anxiety in Marston’s audience.²² Indeed, there is as much reason to interpret Andrugio as a Protestant pastiche of Catholic beliefs in Christian revenants rather than as a sympathetic shadow of the medieval church. In his first appearance on stage the ghost rises from a Christian grave in Saint Mark’s Church and quotes Seneca’s *Thyestes*: “Scelera non ulcisceris, nisi vincis” (3.1.51).²³ Andrugio’s position as a Catholic-tinged ghost in an explicitly Christian setting may therefore have been construed as problematic by a staunch Protestant audience, but certainly no more so than any other theatrical ghost in Renaissance drama.

Instead, the uncomfortable (to a Protestant audience) religious connotations of the ghost’s entrance are part of a far grander effect designed to disorient the audience not on a personal or spiritual level, but on an obvious and immediate theatrical level. In Andrugio’s exclamatory self-unveiling, “And lo, the ghost of old Andrugio / Forsakes his coffin!” (3.1.33-4), the explicit mention of his casket and the suggestion that Antonio’s pangs of anguish “rip my cerecloth *up*” (3.1.32, my italics) all imply a spectacular bursting forth from the stage trapdoor at Antonio’s feet. Given the presence of ghosts in the language of the play up to this point, the appearance of a ghost *per se* is unlikely to have been much of a shock to theatregoers – especially in a revenge tragedy – but in

²² Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 153.

²³ “You do not avenge crimes unless you conquer”, trans. J. S. Keltie. Found in Marston, *Antonio’s Revenge*, J. S. Keltie, ed., *The Works of the British Dramatists* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1870), 364-382, 373, n.2.

the context of Antonio's verbal misdirection the location from which Andrugio emerges onto the stage may well have come as a surprise. Not only is it rare in any case to see ghosts in contemporary early modern drama rise so explicitly from the grave,²⁴ but the location from which the spirit of Andrugio appears – from beneath rather than above – directly contradicts what Antonio has led theatregoers to expect.

More important than immediate surprise of Andrugio's return, however, is the knock-on effect which the ghost's entrance has on the remainder of the play. By rising so emphatically from the grave, Andrugio stages a very literal breach of the divide between life and death that reshapes the landscape of *Antonio's Revenge* in terms of living/dead interaction. If until this point ghosts exist on the periphery of the action, like Feliche's corpse, hanging half-hidden above the stage, Andrugio's self-exhumation relocates the dead literally and figuratively to centre-stage – from the equivocal realm of Antonio's "slumbr'ing powers" (1.3.41) to the immediacy of a forsaken coffin. In this environment of explicit living/dead interaction it makes perfect sense for Antonio to "force [Piero to] feed on life" in order to bring about his death (3.3.89) – a promise that he keeps literally and figuratively when he tricks Piero into consuming the corpse of his son disguised as "sweetmeats ... with tart sour sauce!" (5.5.20-1). By the same token, it makes sense for Julio, naïve though he may be, to issue his murderer the warning "And you kill me, 'deed, I'll tell my father" (3.3.27-8). Andrugio's resurrection not only draws the audience's attention to the closeness

²⁴ It is interesting to note that, for all of the medieval ghost-lore which observes an active relationship between ghost and corpse, graveyard scenes may well be the least haunted locations in early modern drama. Although the ghost of Hamlet in Shakespeare's play would have *returned* to his grave under the stage, outside of *Antonio's Revenge* I recall only one other on-stage example of a ghost that *rises* directly from the grave: that of the Lady in Middleton's *Maiden's Tragedy*, whose "tombstone flies open" to reveal the spirit (4.5.42 SD).

between life and death in Marston's tragedy, but also signals the dissolution of distinctions between the two terms for the remainder of the play.

The most immediately obvious juxtaposition of life and death following Andrugio's return from the dead is the Ghost's characterisation itself, which effectively blurs the line between life and death in ways that stand in stark contrast to everything theatregoers may have come to expect from contemporary dramatic ghosts. Andrugio is, as Gair observes, unequivocally "definite and explicit".²⁵ His appearances are not restricted to dreams or periphery roles like outsider Don Andrea sitting as the chorus, or Banquo, entering the stage as a silent apparition visible to only one person. Instead, Andrugio spends perhaps more time on the stage than any other early modern dramatic ghost, and seems able to come and go whenever he pleases. In physical appearance and motivation Andrugio is clearly a descendant of the conventional "filthie whining ghost" of classical revenge tragedy mocked in the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599):

Lapt in some fowle sheet or a leather pilch,
Comes skreaming in like a pigge halfe stickt,
And cries, "Vindicta! Revenge, Revenge!"²⁶

In other respects, however, there is little to separate Andrugio from the ranks of the living. He cries much more than "Vindicta!" during the course of the play, for example. Indeed, his loquaciousness convincingly differentiates him from the ghosts of Senecan tradition and the spirits found throughout contemporaneous early modern drama – including his closest Shakespearean counterpart Old Hamlet. *Hamlet's* Ghost famously speaks in just two of the scenes in which he

²⁵ Gair, Introduction, 26.

²⁶ Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women* (London: By Valentine Sims for William Aspley, 1599), sig. A2v.

appears – both times addressing only his son.²⁷ Andrugio, on the other hand, addresses Antonio and Maria both on separate occasions and together, is overheard by the imprisoned Balurdo in 5.2, and also, it is implied, appears to young Julio, as he tries to sleep: “[Julio] will not sleep”, explains courtier Forobosco to Piero, “but calls to follow you, / Crying that bugbears and spirits haunted him” (3.2.86-87). Andrugio also soliloquises on two occasions (5.1.1-25 and 3.5.31-5) – a very uncommon occurrence among ghostly characters in early modern drama. In addition to his verbal on-stage presence, Andrugio possesses a physical presence as well. His flung-open coffin notwithstanding, Andrugio is able to sit on Maria’s bed and draw her curtains in manifestly palpable interactions with his surroundings that demonstrate how little death has impacted on his ability to engage with the living world (3.4.63 SD, 3.5.30 SD).

In his role within the story, too, Andrugio certainly behaves more like a living revenger than a dead one, and takes a central role in not only inciting vengeance against Duke Piero, but organising the means by which that vengeance is carried out. In his first appearance to Antonio he commands that his son “Invent some stratagem of vengeance” (3.1.48), but in truth Andrugio does not leave Antonio alone for long before he begins to influence his son’s decisions. The moment that Antonio hesitates to murder Julio (“for thy sister’s sake I flag revenge” [3.3.29]), Andrugio intervenes to demand “Revenge!” (3.3.30), impelling Antonio to swiftly reverse his position: “Stay, stay, dear

²⁷ It is true that when Old Hamlet bellows “Swear” at the close of 1.5 his command would appear to be addressed to Horatio and Marcellus, but whether or not this counts as meaningful verbal interaction is arguable. It is unclear from the text alone whether or not the two men do indeed “hear this fellow in the cellarage” as Hamlet does (1.5.168). Hamlet is the only character to ever respond directly to these subterranean cries, and the only textual indication that Horatio might also hear the ghostly cry is his observation “O, day and night, but this is wondrous strange!” at 1.5.182, which may conceivably be a response to Hamlet’s frenzied demeanour rather than the Ghost’s voice.

father, fright mine eyes no more". A scant few scenes later Andrugio again takes charge of the complot against Piero. He incorporates Maria into the revengers' fold, directing her to "Join with my son to bend up strained revenge" and "Maintain a seeming favour to [Piero's] suit / Till time may form our vengeance absolute" (3.5.11-13), before instructing his son to "assume disguise, and dog the court / In feigned habit" (3.5.24-5).

In terms of the tragedy's story, the assured manner in which Andrugio assumes control over the proceedings may appear to stymie the narrative flow, as Gair argues: Andrugio "makes the situation so clear, and ... everyone in the play accepts his assessment" without question (Maria, notably, complies with the Ghost's demands without saying a word), with the result that the Ghost ultimately "denies both suspense and uncertainty to the plot".²⁸ Conversely, however, the environment of living death that Andrugio creates with his resurrection and fosters with his very presence throughout the play creates a suspense and uncertainty of its own that directly influences how the audience understands the story. It is in this atmosphere of life and death bleeding freely into one another that *Antonio's Revenge* reveals its peculiarly self-aware bent, demonstrating an awareness of audience expectations solely so that it may confute them.

This atmosphere of living death leads to one such manipulation of audience expectations in the transition between 3.1 and 3.2, as the Ghost's speech encourages the expectation of conflict between Andrugio and Maria before reneging upon its promise and leaving those expectations unfulfilled. When referring to Maria, the Ghost promises that "before I touch / The banks of rest, my ghost shall visit her" (3.1.42-3). His words are distinctly ominous –

²⁸ Gair, Introduction, 26.

particularly in light of Andrugio's subsequent insistence that Antonio "Seize on revenge, grasp the stern-bended front / Of frowning vengeance" (3.1.45-6).²⁹ The implication is that Andrugio's former wife is to be in some way on the receiving end of that vengeance. As soon as Andrugio exits, however, Maria immediately enters, and although her entrance marks the beginning of a new scene, according to the divisions of the first Quarto,³⁰ 3.2 is set in the same location as 3.1 – Andrugio's tomb – and occurs chronologically directly afterwards, something made clear by the fact that Antonio remains onstage during the transition. All of which is to say that Andrugio and Maria, the ghost and his apparent target, miss one another by such a narrow margin as to completely undermine any sense of foreboding created by Andrugio's apparent threat against her.

Further confusion is caused by the fact that mere moments after Maria vacates the scene, Andrugio's disembodied voice cries "Murder" from somewhere beyond the stage (3.2.74), indicating that the ghost, though invisible, is in the vicinity while Maria is present on stage – something which therefore raises the question of why Andrugio did not appear to Maria when the opportunity was readily available. Andrugio does indeed make good on his promise to haunt Maria a few scenes later (3.4-5), but as far as 3.1 and 3.2 are concerned, the paired scenes are an exercise in creating and confuting audience expectation. Maria's entrance into the space on stage freshly vacated

²⁹ There is clearly room for interpretation of Andrugio's reference to Maria as sympathetic rather than incensed. His description of Piero's "complot / To make her sonless", for example, suggests that Andrugio may simply see Maria as another of Piero's unsuspecting victims. Given, however, that Andrugio openly accuses Maria of disloyalty "to our hym'neal rites" (3.5.1) and of possessing "strumpet blood" (3.5.2), I suggest that Andrugio's attitude at 3.2 is one of anger rather than pity. Indeed, so strong is Andrugio's apparent hostility that when Antonio walks in on Andrugio and Maria some four scenes later he is shocked to find Maria alive: "Why lives that mother?" (3.5.23).

³⁰ Gair attests in the introduction to his edition of the play that the act and scene divisions found in the first Quarto (1602) are "probably authorial" (5).

by her deceased husband creates a huge charge of dramatic potential which fizzles out in favour of a disjointed conversation between mother and son – a conversation in which Antonio invokes “My dead father’s skull”, (3.2.29) the “astonishing terror of swart night” (3.2.26) and “my father’s ghost” (3.2.35) in a manner which serves only to emphasise Andrugio’s absence from the proceedings.

If life and death co-exist in the same locations within the narrative of *Antonio’s Revenge*, it is also the case that in several scenes life and death occupy the same literal theatrical space, and metatheatre arises from ghostly activity that draws on audience awareness of the conventions of theatre itself. Marston derives good comic mileage, for example, from a scene in which the corpulent knight Balurdo claims to be his own “discontented ... ghost” as he wastes away in Piero’s dungeon (5.2.7). Confounded by his inability to “burst through ... stone walls” like genuine spectres were assumed to do, Balurdo imagines himself as a “lean-ribbed” ghost: “I could belch rarely”, he claims, “for I am all wind” (5.2.3, 12). Balurdo’s “ghost” eventually rises from the figurative grave, not to seek intercession or revenge, but to seek food: “O hunger, how thou domineerest ... O for / a fat leg of ewe mutton in stewed broth” (5.2.10-11). His mock-resurrection echoes the plights of other comical figures Falstaff and Strumbo, in *1 Henry IV* at 5.3 and *The Tragedy of Locrine* at 2.6 respectively, both of whom counterfeit their own deaths only to comically return to the world of the living. “Let me alone I tell thee, for I am dead”³¹ insists Strumbo, who masquerades as a talking corpse to avoid running into conflict on the battlefield. Like Balurdo, Strumbo stages a subsequent miraculous resurrection in the name of material goods, and the moment he hears that “theeves” may be

³¹ Anon., *Locrine*, sig. E2.

roaming the battlefield, he shoots back to his feet: "Where be they? [...] bobekin let me rising, be gone, we shall be robde by and by".³² Marston himself actually incorporates false ghosts into his tragedy's prequel *Antonio and Mellida*. That play builds its comic resolution around the supposed "rise from death" of both Antonio and his father Andrugio.³³ Antonio seems particularly to enjoy the effect that his mock-resurrection has upon onlookers, and he revels briefly in the possibility that he may indeed be a ghost – "Stand not amaz'd, great states: / I rise from death" – before finally revealing his "Tragedie" to be an act.³⁴

At first glance, the scene would seem to follow post-Reformation anti-papist convention: in his general demeanour the very much alive Balurdo seems to pastiche Catholic conceptions of dead corpses which rise from the grave. The dungeon in which Balurdo is trapped is represented by his speaking "from under the stage" (5.2.1 S.D.), in a space which would have no doubt doubled as the grave of both Andrugio and Feliche during the course of the play. Indeed, it is unlikely that Marston's audience would have received much in the way of visual cues to distinguish one earthy prison from the other. To judge by Marston's stage directions alone, there is certainly a monument on the site of Andrugio's grave, but Feliche's final resting place is freshly-dug and apparently unmarked. Meanwhile, the text itself provides no indication that the "stone walls" of the dungeon beneath the stage are symbolised on the stage in any particular way (5.2.2). In performance, then, prison and gravesite must have been difficult to differentiate for players and theatregoers alike – as, indeed, must have been the figures who emerge from both. By depicting the pathetic figure of Balurdo rising from the same grave in which a corpse had been buried just two scenes

³² Ibid., sig. E2v.

³³ John Marston, *The History of Antonio and Mellida* (London: Printed by R. Bradock for Mathewe Lownes, 1602), sig. I3v.

³⁴ Ibid.

before, and from which Andrugio, rises “up” and “Forsakes his coffin” in 3.1., Marston derives macabre humour from the shared theatrical space. In addition to Balurdo’s location, his physical appearance also contrasts him with Andrugio: in Balurdo’s clothing, Marston draws a sartorial parallel between the prisoner dressed “in rags” (4.3.148) and the tattered cerecloth which covers Andrugio’s risen corpse (2.2.1).

Living death and conventions related to theatrical space are also juxtaposed to metatheatrical effect in 3.2 when Antonio is accosted by the voices of the dead Andrugio and Feliche, and that of the living Pandulpho, all of whom cry “Murder” from, according to Marston’s stage directions, “*above and beneath*” the stage (3.2.74-6, SD 75). This particular instance of living/dead interaction functions quite evidently to off-balance the audience in exactly the kind of way Bowers describes. The staging of young revenger Antonio, vocally surrounded by the pleas of dead men enlisting his help, may be aesthetically appealing, but the manner in which these two separate and distinct voices of the dead call for revenge also imparts something of a mixed message. The voices originate, after all, from above and beneath the stage – areas traditionally representing Heaven and Hell respectively – connotations which take on additional significance in light of the fact that *Antonio’s Revenge* is set in an unequivocally Christian location. The set-piece thus raises obvious questions regarding the theological implications of ghosts and vengeance, and in doing so creates with a stage effect the same atmosphere of ghost-centric uncertainty that *Hamlet* achieves with a line of dialogue: “Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell” (1.4.21). The effect is certainly intentional on Marston’s part.

The ghostly cries from above and below anticipate a number of subsequent instances during the play in which the question of Andrugio's theological origin and motivation is more explicitly raised. Earlier in the same scene, Antonio claims to fear being blasted by the "incensed breath of heaven / If my heart beat on ought but vengeance" (3.2.35-6), which raises a notion of divinely-sanctioned vengeance later supported by Andrugio, who proclaims that "Sons that revenge their father's blood are blest" (5.5.82). Andrugio is also, however, able to command the "sooty coursers of the night" to "Hurry your chariot into hell's black womb" (3.5.31-2), all of which sounds distinctly unheavenly. Marston's choice to direct the attention of his audience to the theatrical subtext of "above"/Heaven and "below"/Hell therefore serves to complement the narrative of his play by representing in microcosm an important facet of Antonio's moral dilemma.

And yet even as Marston draws his audience with the one hand deeper into a world of moral uncertainty by representing the ambiguity of Antonio's revenge through the machinations of theatre, with the other hand he pushes the audience away from that same world by using the character of Pandulpho to draw attention to the theatrical artifice of the entire scenario, driving a wedge between the audience and the story. Bizarrely, the voice of Pandulpho – who is neither dead nor present on stage at the time – accompanies the ghostly voices of Feliche and Andrugio in a jarring living/dead juxtaposition. Pandulpho has an obvious reason to wail ghost-like for justice – his son Feliche has been murdered and he himself has been banished from court – and yet the accompaniment of his living voice with the voices of the dead is incongruous to say the least. It is unclear why his voice would be coming from above or beneath the stage, and the vengeful cry itself is completely at odds with

Pandulpho's prior depiction as standing for high-minded Christian-stoic ideals. If the inclusion of Pandulpho in the "Murder" chorus is meant to be understood as a heavy-handed ironic comment on revenge-tragedy traditions of stoicism, perhaps preparing the audience for Pandulpho's eventual lapse from high-minded Christian-stoic idealism to bloody-minded revenger, the joke falls flat: the process of Pandulpho's transformation does not conclude until 4.5, and so a ghost-like cry for vengeance in 3.2 makes little to no sense within the context of a linear narrative. Alternatively, Pandulpho's appearance in the scene may simply be an aberration on Marston's part, or an ineffable stylistic quirk – and judging by the lack of modern analysis of the scene (even among those critics who actively search for the play's ironic subtext), one may assume that this is the attitude adopted by most current scholars. Antonio's response to the ghostly cries, which makes no mention of Pandulpho, would also appear to support the aberration theory: "graves and ghosts / fright me no more" (3.2.77-8), he begs; neither term is applicable to Pandulpho.

And yet if one considers the "Murder" chorus in relation to the events which follow, one may observe that the most problematic feature of the scene – the way in which it subverts the drama by drawing attention to the artifice of theatrical performance – actually anticipates the significant juxtapositions of life and death *en route* to the play's catastrophe. Following the living dead demands for "Murder", Marston presents his audience with two contrasting depictions of domestic relations – Piero's relationship with Julio, and Andrugio's relationship with Maria and Antonio – that both defy convention. Piero's interactions with Julio are subversive on two different levels. First, in his appearance upon entering, Piero completely undercuts the ominous resonance of the previous scene. As Bowers observes:

Antonio, agitated by Pandulpho along with the ghosts of his father and Feliche, vows finally and emotively, 'Fright me no more; I'll suck red vengeance / Out of Piero's wounds...' [3.2.78-9]. And Piero immediately enters '*in his nightgown and nightcap*' [3.2.79 SD], a touchingly ironic and harmless picture of concerned parenthood.³⁵

Physically, Piero could not resemble any less the villain who began the play "*unbraced, his arms bare, smeared in blood, a poniard in one hand, and a torch in the other*" (1.1.1 SD). His actions, too, are a departure from what has previously been established, lacking the exaggeratedly villainous air that we have come to expect. Indeed, in his interactions with Julio, who enters the scene shortly afterwards, Piero exhibits the very values of idealised domesticity that he rails against in the first act: shifting from someone happy to "Poison the father, butcher the son, and marry the mother" (1.1.104) to one who fawns over his "pretty little son" (3.2.84). There are clear metatheatrical connotations here. The scene seems to assume the audience's knowledge that the actor playing the villain today may act the hero tomorrow – a point made by Marston himself in the Induction to *Antonio and Mellida*, where the child actor playing Antonio frets about his ability to double as an Amazon, and is set straight summarily: "Not play two parts in one? away, away: tis common fashion. Nay if you cannot bear two subtle fronts under one hood, Ideot goe by, goe by; off this worlds stage" (sig. A4).

This new "front" of Piero, however, is just that – an illusion of idealised domesticity that, even as it subverts Antonio's bloody mission from his dead father, is itself subverted. Piero, after all, already proved himself to be capable of tearing his family asunder when he framed and imprisoned his own daughter

³⁵ Bowers, "John Marston at the 'mart of woe'", 21.

Mellida in the first act. His actions against Mellida's fiancé Antonio eventually lead to her death – the news of which he greets with characteristic nonchalance: "I will not stay my marriage for all this!" Furthermore, although he chides Forobosco for allowing Julio to "walk so late" (3.2.85), he is careless enough to leave his son behind when he exits the scene. Like Mellida, Julio too is fated for death in the name of his father – this time at the hands of Antonio, who at the behest of his own father, justifies his grotesque and ritualistic killing of Julio in terms of the boy's relationship to Piero. There may well be an element of satire at work here, attacking the mentality of the revenger: the resonances of the scene, for example, run deeply through the irrationality of blood feud and human sacrifice as argued by René Girard in his study of *Violence and the Sacred*.³⁶

Yet even in the midst of seeming irrationality there is a morbid logic in the way that Julio's ghost-incensed murder encapsulates Piero's destruction of his own family unit. Piero has, in a manner of speaking, already sacrificed his daughter in the pursuit of power and neglected his son in pursuit of illicit love. It is not altogether irrational in the context of Piero's wickedness that Julio's death is framed around consanguine terms such as "brother", "father" and "sister" (3.3.1, 26,28) – words that Piero has robbed of all significance. Antonio justifies Julio's murder as a necessary separation not just of body and soul, but of father from son ("It is not thee I hate, not thee I kill. / Thy father's blood that flows within thy veins / Is it I loathe" [3.3.34-6]) and it is telling of the extent to which Piero has discredited his own bloodline that under such terms Julio calmly accepts his fate: "So you will love me, do even what you will" (3.3.42). The domestic decay caused by Piero is taken to its logical symbolic conclusion in

³⁶ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977).

the final act of the play, when he unknowingly consumes the flesh of his own son.

While Piero's family unit is defined by its destruction, that of Andrugio, conversely, is defined in *Antonio's Revenge* by restoration – a rebuilding only possible in the play's environment of living death. In no scene is the domestic restoration of Andrugio's family as significant as in the closet encounter between Andrugio, Maria and Antonio, which takes place over two scenes that mark a jarring juxtaposition of convention and parody, high melodrama and dark comedy. The family encounter is initially framed in tragic terms of absence and emptiness, as Maria laments her "cold widow-bed, sometime thrice blest / By the warm pressure of my sleeping lord" (3.2.69-70). However, the same line which acts as melodramatic climax to her mournful soliloquy – "Alas, my dear Andrugio's dead!"³⁷ – actually doubles as the set up to a joke, and the punchline is Andrugio's entrance:

MARIA draweth the curtain, and the Ghost of ANDRUGIO is displayed sitting on the bed.

Amazing terror, what portent is this?³⁸

Just as Piero's entrance in his nightgown subverts Antonio's bloodlust, Andrugio's entrance, which presents substance where she expected absence, provides a darkly comical antithesis to Maria's melodrama. Unlike the entrance of Piero into the graveyard, Andrugio's appearance is not entirely unexpected – there is dramatic irony in the audience's shared awareness that Andrugio intends to visit his widow by virtue of his promise three scenes prior (3.1.43), and in any case the drawn curtain which Maria gestures towards while decrying

³⁷ *Antonio's Revenge*, 3.2.72.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.2. SD, 74.

the absence of her husband functions like Chekhov's proverbial gun. Indeed, the curtain becomes so loaded with ghostly significance that the audience would undoubtedly have been surprised if it had been drawn back to reveal something as pedestrian as a mere bed.³⁹

The significance of his unveiling, however, goes beyond confronting domestic absence with physical presence. Andrugio's return to Maria's marital bed signals the creation of a picture of living dead domesticity to diametrically counteract Piero's, created by the arrival of Andrugio and Antonio moments later. The relationship between the three is not without its tensions, certainly, and initially the family dynamic on display seems no less dysfunctional than Piero's. Maria's mournful, contemplative speech makes way for "Amazing terror" (3.4.64). Andrugio is a fearsome presence who denounces his wife's "strumpet blood" (3.5.2): "Hast thou so soon forgot Andrugio? / Are our love-bands so quickly cancellèd?" (3.5.3-4). Antonio bursts into the scene with the intention of killing his mother, and his appearance – "*his arms bloody, [bearing]* a torch and poniard" (3.5.13 SD) – mirrors that of Piero at the beginning of the play. Crucially, however, in a tragedy full of destroyed families, the meeting between the three presents the first depiction of a complete family unit in the entire play. Furthermore, the very reason for this particular unit's initial disarray becomes the focal point for its reconciliation: in death, Andrugio provides a rallying point for Maria and Antonio: "Join with my son to bend up strained revenge" (3.5.11), the Ghost tells Maria. Even before Antonio enters, Andrugio's ghost reveals a distinctly un-ghostly light-heartedness, which sees him abandon the conventional sadness of the early modern theatrical ghost and "pardon" his

³⁹ Anton Chekhov's loaded gun principle (usually referred to as "Chekhov's Gun") states that one should not put a loaded rifle on the stage if no one is thinking of firing it. See Ernest J. Simmons, *Chekhov: A Biography* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962), 190.

widow (3.5.7). In a manner more befitting of a comic resolution than a tragic one, Andrugio renews in living death his family ties, before wishing “Peace and all blessed fortunes to you both” (3.5.28).

The subversive spirit of comic resolution in the midst of tragedy created by Andrugio’s ghost carries through to the play’s bloody conclusion, which sees Antonio and Maria (alongside Balurdo and Pandulpho) torture and kill Piero while Andrugio applauds from the sidelines. Unusually for a tragedy, Antonio and his accomplices escape the fallout unscathed – none die, and all are pardoned by the Venetian senate before vowing to spend the rest of their days in a religious order. Of all the reasons critics have for decrying *Antonio’s Revenge* as an aberration, the denial of traditional tragic form in the play’s conclusion is one of the most prevalent. As T.B. Tomlinson suggests, the idea that the revengers may be allowed to get away scot-free seems morally reprehensible when one considers the crimes that they have committed in the name of vengeance. The revengers are praised for their deeds, but “Even the simplest conventional comment on the murder of the innocent Julio is omitted – or forgotten”, and the “tone of the play at the end is one of unqualified approval of all this”.⁴⁰ The cumulative effect of living death throughout the play, however, is to reiterate the fact that the world of *Antonio’s Revenge* exists outside of standard moral, narrative and theatrical conventions. The blurring of life and death in the build to a conclusion that juxtaposes both concepts allows for conflicting elements to clash in unpredictable and exciting ways, deconstructing, in Bowers’ terms, the “notions of sanity and society and the conventional cause-and-effect relationships that purport to hold a society together”.⁴¹ In the

⁴⁰ T.B. Tomlinson, *A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964), 220.

⁴¹ Bowers, “John Marston at the ‘mart of woe’”, 15.

environment that Marston creates, the deaths of Julio, Feliche, and Mellida are all necessary parts of Piero's ultimate destruction, and by the same token those deaths are also necessary to the life and restoration of Andrugio's household.

Marston's subversion of the revenge tragedy genre, as well as his unconventional use of ghosts in *Antonio's Revenge* may have caused much critical debate around whether the play is any good, but it also allowed him to explore several themes, common in the plays of his early modern counterparts, in unusual ways to great effect. Marston uses ghosts to play upon his Protestant audience's preoccupation with the differing Catholic and Protestant understandings of ghosts. However, Marston relies not entirely on dialogue to engage his audience, but instead incorporates metatheatricality into the very staging of his drama, utilising the spaces around the stage not only to demarcate living and dead zones, but also to blur the definitions between the two. In allowing living and dead voices to be heard in unison, or living and dead characters to share common spaces, Marston opens up the "conference with the dead" that the Duchess of Malfi so longed for (4.2.21). While in many other contemporary plays, then, living/dead interaction proves unsatisfactory, in *Antonio's Revenge* we are allowed a rare concession. The audience, bereft of the ability to interact with the living dead in Protestant England, is allowed into a subversive world in which the living and dead freely intermingle. Not only does this environment of living death, therefore provide the means by which Andrugio's household is ultimately restored, it also allows for the shocking juxtaposition of contrasting ideas including life and death, actor and audience, tragedy and comedy, and Catholicism and Protestantism. While Marston does not offer any real sense of resolution between these opposing concepts, the ways in which living death

manifests throughout *Antonio's Revenge* nevertheless force us to reconsider how we perceive the distinctions between them.

The Political Dead in Anthony Munday's *Chruso-thriambos*

Just as Marston's subversion of the revenge tragedy genre allowed him to blur the spaces between the living and the dead, so too does Anthony Munday's 1611 pageant, the Lord Mayor's Show *Chruso-thriambos*,¹ allow the writer to present living and dead characters from London's history, walking the streets of London together. The pageant, written for the Company of Goldsmiths to commemorate the election of Sir James Pemberton as mayor, takes the form of a celebration of London's history, featuring heavily the tropes of ghosts and resurrection. Munday, I argue in this chapter, presents a variety of living dead characters including former mayors and monarchs in order to establish the power of the new Lord Mayor, while in turn responding to contemporary discourses surrounding gold, witchcraft and wealth, and to comment on the present via the past.

However, just as modern studies of *Antonio's Revenge* are invariably haunted by the ghosts of critics past, so too is *Chruso-thriambos* (1611) haunted by the figurative and literal memory of Munday's predecessor John Stow. By basing a deceased historical character – London's first Lord Mayor, Sir Henry Fitz-Alwine, named Leofstane in the pageant, who acts as a guide to the new mayor – on the description of Fitz-Alwine in Stow's *Survey of London* (1598), Munday unintentionally raises the ghost of Stow himself. Given that Munday had inherited the responsibility of editing the *Survey* after Stow's death in 1602, and that the style of the Lord Mayor's Show and Stow's work were similarly Janus-faced, looking both to the past and to the immediate future, it is perhaps unsurprising that Stow's memory should have taken on such

¹ Anthony Munday, *Chruso-thriambos. The Triumphes of Golde*. (London: Imprinted by William Iaggard, 1611).

significance in Munday's later work as a pageant-writer. And yet in this instance it is also unfortunate that Stow proved so influential: the *Survey* – and therefore Munday's pageant – was discovered to be incorrect on several key points. As I will discuss in the first part of this chapter, not only did the controversies that arose from Munday's mistakes have long-lasting repercussions for both Munday and Stow's legacies, it also undermined *Chruso-thriambos*' central message – imparted by the ghosts of dead mayors – of virtue and charity.

In Munday's later pageant for the guild of Fishmongers, *Chrysanaleia* (1616),² Stow's figurative and literal memory is a less palpable influence than in the earlier *Chruso-thriambos*, although his presence can still be felt vicariously in Munday's depiction of legendary former Lord Mayor Sir William Walworth, which marks a departure from the *Survey*'s version of events. In the pageant, Munday describes Walworth, who is raised from his tomb in front of the audience at St Paul's, as being responsible for the image of a dagger on the London coat of arms – a suggestion that Stow had dismissed in 1598. On this occasion, however, Munday was wrong to disregard the *Survey*, as Stow was found to be correct about the issue.

Mistaken or not, Munday's movement away from Stow – and away from the past – is indicative of the general tone of *Chrysanaleia* as a whole. Unlike *Chruso-thriambos*, which used representatives from the dead to direct the audience's gaze towards the past, the Fishmongers' Show focuses primarily on issues of legacy and resurrects figures from history such as Walworth and King Richard in order to ask questions of the future. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the use of ghosts in pageants allowed for a direct conversation between the past and the present. Unlike in *Chruso-thriambos*, the tropes of

² Anthony Munday, *Chrysanaleia: The Golden Fishing: or, Honour of Fishmongers*. (London: by George Purslowe, 1616).

death and resurrection in *Chrysanaleia*, are not used so that historical figures can advise the living, but to question the type of legacy a current Lord Mayor might – and could – impart for future holders of that office.

Stow, Munday, and The Lord Mayor's Shows as "Memory Theatre"

When Stow, London's pre-eminent historian and antiquary, died in 1602, he passed the editorial responsibilities of his greatest work, the seminal *Survey* down to his friend and sometime collaborator Anthony Munday, a playwright and pageant-poet. In its structure, the *Survey* bore much in common with the civic pageants that Munday came to make his name writing: although the former was designed to be read and the latter performed, both took the form of peripatetic explorations of the city and its history that were written to forge links between the past and the present, the living and the dead. Stow's writing sought to bring historical London to life by celebrating notable people and places in the context of the present, while pageant-writers such as Munday orchestrated theatrical performances around London which included historical figures as part of the contemporary drama. Both Munday and Stow were in the business of raising ghosts.

At the centre of both of their media was the city of London itself, which functions as a link between the living and the dead by virtue of associations made between location and cultural memory. In Steven Mullaney's study of the "rhetoric" of civic space, "Civic Rites, City Sites", he describes how Stow's London becomes in the *Survey* a figurative "memory-theatre", where images of the past "adhere to particular places and can be retrieved or recreated by the

sort of topical and ambulatory inquiry that structures the *Survey*".³ According to Mullaney, Stow's guide reads as an archaeological study of the city, "a systematic uncovering of its various lines and sites of significance":

we move from place to place in the city, inquiring at each site as to the significance of the place, the images it holds, the events it has witnessed, the customs and rituals that have left their mnemonic traces on its streets and conduits.⁴

In short, Stow's "memory-theatre" presents the geography of London itself as a combination of playhouse and time-capsule. The city is both the ideal setting in which to imaginatively reconstruct the past, and also an enduring medium through which the present might engage directly with the past. "What *London* hath beene of auncient time", Stow explains in the opening dedication to his *Survey*,⁵ "men may here see, as what it is now every man doth behold" (sig. A3).

Although Mullaney's focus in this context is exclusively the *Survey*, his reading of Stow's work as "memory-theatre" is equally applicable to the format of the Lord Mayor's Show – an exploration of civic history every bit as topical and ambulatory as the *Survey*, but which consisted of a literal "memory-theatre" held in the London streets. As the final collaboration between Stow and Munday in a 1602 pageant indicates, both the *Survey* and the mayoral pageants spring from the same desire to celebrate the past in order to reflect upon the present.⁶

³ Steven Mullaney, "Civic Rites, City Sites: The Place of the Stage", in David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (Routledge: New York, 1991), 17-26, 20.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John Stow, *A survey of London Contayning the originall, antiquity, increase, modern estate, and description of that citie* (Imprinted by John Windet for John Wolfe, 1598).

⁶ No text of the 1602 pageant survives today, but it was evidently in honour of the Merchant Taylors Company. Guild records show that Munday was paid the sum of £30 for providing props and speeches for the Show. The elderly John Stow received ten shillings for historical research into the company. See Robert Theophilus Dalton Sayle, *Lord Mayors' Pageants of the Merchant Taylors Company in the 15th, 16th and 17th Centuries* (London: Eastern Press Ltd, 1931), 65, 70-2.

While the “memory-theatre” of the *Survey* metaphorically allows readers to interact with the past through written text, the Shows allow for a physical interaction with historical characters through performance. Like the *Survey*, the Shows utilise the memory of the city, but for the pageants these memories include those of the citizens / audience members who may interpret new Shows in terms of what they remember from previous ones, and also the figurative memory of the city landmarks themselves which are established components of the annual pageant. Celebrating the past thus becomes an integral part of each performance and ties the Show – and by extension, the new Mayor – to the ongoing narrative of London’s cultural-historical institution.

London's transformation into a theatrical space during the Lord Mayor's Show, drawing connections between the past and the present, the living and the dead, occurs quite organically. Not only does London possess, as Stow recognised, an inherent theatricality, but the city space itself is steeped in a tradition of street theatre that dates back to the Middle Ages. The Lord Mayor's Show is therefore part of the very cultural institution that it celebrates, and its contents, themes and structure uniquely intertwine the past and present. The Lord Mayor's Show, as Anne Lancashire observes, has existed in one form or another since the early thirteenth century, but in the mid-sixteenth century when Henry VIII's war costs made funding another annual street spectacular, the Midsummer's Watch, impossible, the Lord Mayor's Show became London's only major recurring street theatre event.⁷ By the time that Munday, the city's most prolific pageant-writer, came to write his first recorded civic pageant in 1602, the Lord Mayor's Show had become London's biggest street pageantry event. The profile of such celebrations could only have grown in prestige following the

⁷ Anne Lancashire, “London Street Theatre”, in Richard Dutton ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 323-39.

“lavish royal entry into London of James I”.⁸ The Show was held annually on or around the 29th October, and consisted of “basically a procession through London as the new mayor made his way to Westminster” to take his oath of allegiance to the monarch.⁹ The mayor then returned to the city as the central figure of a symbol- and allegory-laden dramatic show featuring water displays along the Thames, elaborately decorated pageant carts and various theatrical tableaux stationed along the route, all designed to showcase the prestige of whichever of the Great Twelve City Livery Companies to which the mayor belonged. Thus in terms of calendrical significance and historical and civic content, each annual Show was inevitably – proudly, even – haunted by London tradition.

The Shows were also inevitably haunted by the city location itself. As befits a festival held in honour of the mayor – whose entire *raison d’être* was to embody community spirit and represent “the whole Society”¹⁰ – the locations through which the Show progressed were more than just backdrops to the dramatic performances, they were integral to both the ritual of the procession and the narrative of the dramatic performance. The pageants took the same route each year, stopping during the Mayor’s return to the city at several prominent London locations such as St Paul’s, where the mayor would attend mass, and Cheapside, the city’s commercial district. Thus in terms of route alone each Show invoked the ghosts of Shows past by very literally following in the footsteps of those that came before it. The organisers of the Show were keenly aware of the significance of the city-wide route, which was essential to both demonstrate and confirm civic power. Ian Munro writes:

⁸ Ibid, 329.

⁹ David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), 123.

¹⁰ Middleton, *Triumphes of Truth*, sig. A3r

by tracing a time-honoured route through the ceremonial heart of the city, the Shows sought to enact an urban space in which the power of civic authorities was not only calendrically visible, but ... installed in the physical space of the city'¹¹

The concept of power as something installed – fundamentally integrated – into the bricks and mortar of the city itself is emphasised through the ways in which Shows invariably utilised the various London locations to dramatic effect. In *Chruso-thriambos*, Munday conducts “Divers Sea-fights and skirmishes”¹² along the Thames to demonstrate Britain’s famous naval prowess. At the same time, barges transport King and Queen of the Moors, *Chiorison* and *Tumanama*, who bring with them “no meane quantity of *Indian Gold*”, down the river into London so that they may “behold the Countries beauty”, exemplifying the role of the Thames as both an entrance into London and as London’s central route of commerce.¹³ *Chruso-thriambos* and *Chrysanaleia* also incorporate St Paul’s into a central part of their dramatic narratives by holding their respective resurrection scenes in the churchyard. It is by the looming presence of the Cathedral that the reanimated medieval mayor Sir Nicholas Faringdon, confused at his sudden return from the dead at the hands of Time, is able to re-orient himself in time and space:

How? Whence? or where
May I suppose my selfe? Well, I wot,
(If *Faringdon* mistake it not)
That ancient famous Cathedrall,
Hight the Church of blessed *Paul* .¹⁴

¹¹ Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: The City and its Double* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2005), 56.

¹² Munday, *Chruso-thriambos*, sig. A3v.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Munday, *Chruso-thriambos*, sig. B4.

Faringdon's reaction to the sight of St Paul's presents in microcosm the fundamental purpose of the Lord Mayor's Show, that is, to establish the power of the newly-appointed mayor. By displaying him in the context of transcendent cultural and geographical loci, Faringdon is guided through temporal confusion by the sight of a London landmark that, like the disinterred former Mayor, belongs at once to history and also to the present.

In the Lord Mayor's Shows, then, political power is inextricably intertwined with civic memory. The city locations that the pageant passes through are certainly vital components in linking the present to the past but, as one would expect, the story of each individual pageant also dramatises the relationship between memory and power. The use of theatre to respond to or reflect political power is by no means a rarity in Renaissance drama. In my discussion of *Antonio's Revenge* I described some of the processes in which Marston's blend of tragedy and satire were subversive of social order. As Greenblatt has suggested, however, theatre is a powerful tool for legitimising power as well as subverting it. Power, according to Greenblatt, perpetuated itself in the Renaissance by creating a demonised opposition, like the way in which accusations of atheism indirectly upheld orthodoxy, and more generally by provoking and then releasing anxiety, as when James I followed a set of grisly public executions with pardons announced upon the scaffold, winning vast applause, which I discussed in further depth earlier in this thesis.¹⁵

The Lord Mayor's Shows functioned in the same way as those ritually theatricalised pardons, acting as theatrical legitimations of the mayor's power that often responded to current affairs in the context of London's own history or mythology. For example, Donna Hamilton has commented on the timeliness of

¹⁵ Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 22, 136.

Anthony Munday's commentary in *Sidero-Thriambos* (1618)¹⁶ on the place of the Ironmongers in quelling past and present social hostility. On the very same morning that Munday's pageant displayed figures representing "those vile Incendiaries, *Ambition*, *Treason*, and *Hostility*, manacled together in Iron shackles" (sig. Cr), Sir Walter Raleigh was executed in the Old Palace Yard at Westminster.¹⁷ Occasionally emphasis is placed not on celebrating the benefits of powerful civic leadership, but on demonising the failings of corrupt authorities so as to glorify the new mayor by way of contrast, directly confronting the possible future problems which a capable mayor should avoid. In Thomas Middleton's *The Triumphes of Truth* (1613),¹⁸ written for the Grocers' Company, Middleton engages with concerns about social and moral order, channelling the attitude of his Puritan-dominated employers by comparing the virtues of the new mayor to mistakes of the past. The allegorical figures of Truth and Error make what Lawrence Manley considers especially frank allusions "to contemporary vices threatening the City rulers",¹⁹ with Error taking special care to spell out to the new mayor Thomas Middleton (no relation) the ignoble temptations of "Bribes", "revenge or gaine" that might befall a man of authority:

great Power this day,
Is given into thy hand, make use on't Lord,
And let thy Will and Appetite sway the Sword
(sig. B2v)

Implicit in Error's message to the mayor is the suggestion that some of the men in positions of authority around the city may have already acquiesced to vice. It

¹⁶ Anthony Munday, *Sidero-Thriambos. Or Steele and Iron Triumphing* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, dwelling in Foster lane, 1618).

¹⁷ Donna Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560-1633* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 162.

¹⁸ Thomas Middleton, *The Triumphes of Truth* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613).

¹⁹ Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 282.

is up to Middleton, Truth proclaims, to establish a new precedent: “I have set Thee High now, bee so in Example”, Truth warns, “There is no hiding of thy Actions now” (sig. D2).

Middleton’s sentiments are, Tracy Hill observes, echoed in Munday’s *Metropolis coronata* (1615),²⁰ which casts a similarly observant eye on “the decline of the representatives of civic paternalism”.²¹ the character of Fitz-Alwine mourns the loss of the “right worthy men” who once constituted the Drapers’ Company, and prays that “Honours now doe crowne this day” (sig. Br) as a return by the guild to its former glory. In these ways the Shows work to legitimise the power of the new mayor by establishing a relationship – a chain of authority – between him and an idealised past.

As Fitz-Alwine’s very presence in *Metropolis coronata* suggests, however, the Lord Mayor’s Shows also resonate with James’ scaffold theatrics in another, more immediate, sense. Just as James made clear the scope of his ultimate authority by exercising power over the life and death of convicted criminals, so too do the Lord Mayor’s Shows exercise power over the life and death of deceased historical figures, featuring the dead as characters in the dramatic portions of each pageant. Given that the purpose of the civic pageants is to illuminate the present through the lens of the past, it stands to reason that civic events so intrinsically rooted in London’s history might include characters representing individuals who witnessed and contributed to it. For the purposes of the pageants, these characters take the form of ghosts - temporarily resurrected and / or reanimated incarnations of dead London nobles. These characters are all, like dead former mayor Fitz-Alwine, “raysde from rest” to take

²⁰ Anthony Munday, *Metropolis coronata, The Triumphes of Ancient Drapery: or, Rich Clothing of England* (London: Printed by George Purslowe, 1615).

²¹ Tracey Hill, *Pageantry and power: A cultural history of the early modern Lord Mayor’s Show, 1585-1639* (Manchester: MUP, 2010), 310.

part in the festivities (sig. A4v). The ghosts are themselves part of the very chain of authority that they advocate, and thus help to legitimise the power of the new mayor in two ways, first by indicating the significance of the Shows themselves and the mayors that they represent: the civic power on display is important enough that even the dead wish to join in the celebrations. Secondly, and even more significantly, the ghosts stand as larger-than-life representatives of the past; they are links in a chain of authority and therefore directly establish a connection between the past and the present. It is to these fascinating variations of the living dead that I now turn.

“Drawne to the Life”: Ghosts in the London Pageants

Ghosts of historical figures were a familiar sight in the Lord Mayor’s Shows. One of the primary purposes of a civic pageant is, as Curtis Perry observes, “to legitimate the civic elite in the eyes of a wider viewing and reading public”,²² and the ghosts of London nobles that we see in London pageants such as Munday’s *Chruso-thriambos* and *Chrysanaleia* are uniquely suited to the purpose that Perry identifies. Ghosts in the London pageants also held the unique function of bringing the history of London (back) to life in what Palmer calls “an innovative merger between commerce and Christianity”.²³ As I have noted in the first part of this chapter, after the shift from Catholicism to Protestantism in early modern England the appearance of ghosts became more problematic, and while the theatre became the *de facto* locus of living-dead interaction, the way in which

²² Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 200.

²³ Daryl W. Palmer, “Metropolitan Resurrection in Anthony Munday’s Lord Mayor’s Shows”, *Studies in English Literature*, 46/2 (Spring 2006), 371-87, 374.

ghosts were used on stage could still be considered controversial if they appeared to promote Catholic teachings. The ghosts in Munday's pageant are therefore inevitably linked to religious discourses about resurrection. However, the merger "between commerce and Christianity", as I will discuss, also creates a theological problem in defining these ghosts, because the commercial reason for their return to the land of the living – simply to take part in a pageant – had no precedent in established theological teachings on revenants' return.

Festive interaction between the living and the dead in some shape or form was an integral part of some of the most high-profile pageants of the Jacobean era. King James' own royal entry into London in 1604, for instance, was marked by a pageant penned by Thomas Dekker, Ben Jonson and Stephen Harrison that featured King Henry VII ("royally seated in his Imperiall Robes") proffering to James his royal staff.²⁴ Moments afterwards, James was heralded by two dead "Sea personages" who were "drawne to the life" by the new monarch's arrival (sig. C2v-C3r). Munday wrote his first ever Lord Mayor's Show the following year: *The triumphes of re-united Britania*, which honoured the Company of Merchant-Taylors.²⁵ This pageant featured the ghosts of several mythical figures including Brutus, who rejoices that "after so long slumbering in our toombes / Such multitudes of yeares, rich poesie / ... does revive us" (sig. B3r).

Although these reanimated figures are, as Brutus' words suggest, acutely aware of their own deaths and reanimations, the long-dead figures personified during the entertainment are not strictly speaking treated as ghosts at all. For

²⁴ Thomas Dekker, *The magnificent entertainment* (London: Thomas Creede, Humphrey Lowes, Edward Alde and others, 1604).

²⁵ Anthony Munday, *The triumphes of re-united Britania* (London: W. Jaggard, 1605). Munday had previously collaborated with Jonson for the Haberdashers' Show in 1604. See Jean Robertson and D.L. Gordon, eds., *Collections III: A Calendar of Dramatic Records in the Books of the Livery Companies of London, 1485-1640* (Oxford: Malone Society, 1954), 63.

the purposes of the pageant, the theatrical afterlife of the risen mayors is explained not in terms of medieval beliefs and Purgatory, but in terms of Church-sanctioned belief in *resurrection*. Munday frames the reanimation of long-dead Sir William Walworth in terms of Christian resurrection in *Chrysanaleia* (1616), the pageant for the Fishmonger mayor Sir John Leman: Walworth greets Leman in St Paul's churchyard with the joyous claim that he was "raysd this day, / To do what gracefull helpe I may / Unto that band of worthy men, / That were and are my Brethren" (sig. Cr). Similarly, in *Chruso-thriambos*, Munday has the personification of Time compare Pemberton's election to Sir Nicholas Faringdon's resurrection. Just as Pemberton was "raisd unto this high authority", Time likewise "at this instant call [ed]" Faringdon to "beare a part in this solemnity" (sig. B4v).

The implicit connections between the events of the pageants and Christian beliefs, as well as the simple fact that the resurrection scenes in both pageants take place in St Paul's churchyard, suggest that the ghosts in the Lord Mayor's Shows were accepted by the Protestant community as exceptions to the Church of England's officially unfavourable attitude towards ghosts in general. The resurrected mayors did not merely operate in a theological blind spot, however. On the contrary, it can be argued that the juxtaposition of Biblical language and civic power that accompanies the risen dead in these pageants enforces the authority of the church by presenting God's power in microcosm. Daryl Palmer observes that in *Chruso-thriambos* Munday equates "the raising of the dead" with "the raising of a goldsmith to the office of lord mayor".²⁶ In doing so, Palmer suggests, Munday boldly claims that "the city's

²⁶ Daryl W. Palmer, "Metropolitan Resurrection", 377.

power to elevate reflects God's ultimate power over death".²⁷ The same may be said of Walworth's "gracefull" resurrection in the service of his living counterpart in *Chrysanaleia*, and also of the final passage of the 1615 pageant for the Drapers, *Metropolis coronata*, in which Munday actually dramatises a display of the city's power to 'raise.' The characters of Robin Hood and Friar Tuck sense that the time for their departure draws near, and so the Friar begs new mayor John Jolles ("that may command, / ... heart and hand, / Of mee and all these good Yeomen") to prolong their stay,

Seeing jolly *Christmas* drawes so neere,
When as our service may appeare,
Of much more merit then as now,
[...]
For we have choise delights in store,
Command them, and I crave no more
(sig. C2r-C2v).

We may assume, given Tuck's parting lines, that Jolles demonstrated his power by indulging the request: "Thankes my deare Domine, / And to you noble Homine" (sig. C2v).

If exchanges such as the above tie the dead figures presented in the pageants (and therefore the mayors who are the subjects of the Shows) to Protestant sensibilities, they simultaneously demonstrate how little in practical terms the short-term reanimations of the Friar, Walworth, have in common with the Biblical notions of resurrection. Of the three primary examples of resurrection in the Bible – that of Lazarus, Christ, and the General Resurrection at Judgement Day – thematically, the restorations of former mayors in the London pageants are most similar to that of Lazarus, who was resurrected at

²⁷ Ibid.

the command of a person in front of a community.²⁸ However, unlike the man raised by Christ in Bethany, who went on to enjoy existence beyond Jesus' performance at the tomb,²⁹ the resurrected characters of civic Shows in early modern London generally endured for only as long as the performances of which they were part. As Friar Tuck's request to Jolles suggests, their short shelf-life was something which the characters themselves were keenly aware of. *Chrysanaleia* ends with its deceased fishmonger mayor bidding farewell to the living one, in a neat rhyming couplet, as though tying up loose ends: "Old *Walworth* must to rest againe, / Good-night to you, and all your trayne" (sig. C4r). In *Chruso-thriambos*, Leofstane (the name given to the resurrected first Lord Mayor of London, Henry Fitz-Alwine), like Tuck, expresses hope that he might postpone the moment of his departure a while longer and continue to participate in the festivities: Time "Meanes not (I trust) so soone to sunder us" (sig. Cr).

There is, then, in the language of the deceased mayors in many civic pageants, an inherent suggestion that the figures raised from the dead may have less in common with the everlasting and Protestant-endorsed resurrection of the Bible than with the temporary, illicit encroachments upon the living of the traditional Catholic revenant. This is particularly the case in *Chruso-thriambos*, where the word "ghost" is repeated at several points throughout the pageant in reference to Faringdon and Leofstane. Faringdon's pronouncement in *Chruso-thriambos* that "My minute cals, and Ghosts must go / yet loath I am to leave ye so" (sig. Cr) echoes the grim obligation to time of English theatre's most famous purgatorial ghost, Old Hamlet: "My hour is almost come, / When I to sulphurous

²⁸ See *Ibid.*, 374, 384 n.1

²⁹ The Bible does not reveal quite how long after his resurrection Lazarus lived, but he apparently continued for long enough to dine with Christ prior to the crucifixion, and for the Jewish chief priests to contemplate murdering him. See *KJV* John 12:9-10.

and tormenting flames / Must render up myself" (1.5.4-6). Earlier in the pageant, Time appears to shush Leofstane when the latter muses on the nature of his restoration ("needs must these gaudier daies yeild greater crime, / When long gran'd Ghosts dare thus contend with *Time*" [sig. B2v]), thereby raising potentially difficult questions of his origins. As quickly as the issue is raised, Time dismisses it, and turns his attention (and diverts the audience's) to Pemberton instead: "Enough, no more; Now honourable Lord..." (sig. B2v). The oddly perfunctory response perhaps constitutes a tongue-in-cheek reference to the taboo subject of ghosts in Protestant society, and hints at awareness on Munday's part of the potentially sinister connotations of the men brought back from the dead. In their presentation, then, the dead mayors of the civic pageants do not present the Biblically appropriate symbolism of "inert bodies returning to life", as Palmer suggests,³⁰ so much as an echo of medieval ghost-lore in plain view of Protestant London.

The theological implications of ghosts in Munday's pageants are therefore complex. It is thus surprising that, by and large, the potential ramifications of the resurrected dead mayors have been afforded minimal attention in the long-standing debate concerning Munday's religion. Celeste Turner has argued that Munday's trip to Rome and affiliations with printers John Alde and John Charlewood indicate was a late convert to Catholicism,³¹ although this position has met opposition from some.³² In contrast, Thomas McCoog has described Munday as a "lapsed Catholic",³³ while Hamilton's study

³⁰ Palmer, "Metropolitan Resurrection", 382.

³¹ Celeste Turner, *Anthony Mundy: An Elizabethan Man of Letters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), 14.

³² See Munday, *The English Roman Life*, ed. Philip J. Ayres (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), .xiv; cf. Munday, *A Mirrour of Mutabilitie*, ed. Hans Peter Heinrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), xiii.

³³ Thomas M. McCoog, "'The Flower of Oxford': The Role of Edmund Campion in Early Recusant Polemics", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24/4 (1993), 899-913, 900.

of Munday's alleged recusancy suggests that we consider the option "Munday ... only outwardly conformed to Protestantism". and that despite his occasional "denunciations of the pope and sporadic attacks on relics and images" Munday at no point puts forward an "organised critique of Catholic theology".³⁴ As a skilled equivocator – something which he demonstrates, as I argue shortly, in his dealings with the Goldsmiths and the Drapers in light of the controversy surrounding the first Lord Mayor, Henry Fitz-Alwine – Munday was able to pursue his goals, Hamilton writes, "by eschewing the margins of his society" and opting for "neither recusancy nor open resistance".³⁵ This perspective certainly finds support in his depictions of suspiciously pre-Reformation ghosts in post-Reformation pageants.

And yet, while Munday's treatment of ghosts in might be construed as indicating possible recusancy, Catholic influence does not necessarily equate to subversive pro-Catholic leanings. In many respects the ghosts personified in Munday's shows do not easily lend themselves to a pro-Catholic reading at all. Indeed, the all-important facts surrounding their return from the dead fly in the face of medieval teachings on posthumous communication. In the cases of Walworth and Faringdon, two of the most prominent ghosts to be – quite literally – raised from the grave in front of the London audience, it seems that the dead mayors have no say at all in the matter of their return, and have no cause to appear other than for the Show's own sake. This is in stark contrast to the revenant ghosts of Catholic lore that return of their own volition for spiritual or religious purposes. The scenes of resurrection in *Chruso-thriambos* and *Chrysanaleia* imply that as far as the Shows are concerned, the dead are at the beck and call of figures such as London's Genius and Time, characters more

³⁴ Hamilton, *Anthony Munday*, xvi, xvii

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii-xviii.

mysterious and powerful than themselves. This is certainly the case in *Metropolis coronata*: the ghost of Fitz-Alwine laments to the living mayor that Time “parts us whether we will or no” (sig. Cr). His sentiments are later echoed by Robin Hood, whose explanation for his ghostly presence entirely discounts notions of unfinished business, Purgatory and intercessionary prayer, and instead gives the impression that civic pageants are the sole reason why the dead may return:

Since Graves may not their Dead containe,
Nor in their peacefull sleepes remaine,
But Triumphes and great Showes must use them
(sig. Cv).

Simultaneously invoking and rejecting the traditional notions of the ghost, which I set out earlier in this study, the living dead characters Munday presents in his pageants offer a peculiarly dichotomous connection to the English past, at once politically empowering and theologically problematic. This dichotomy, however, informs and influences the powerfully symbolic expository role that these ghostly figures take in pageants such as *Chrysanaleia* and *Chruso-thriambos*. The audience’s understanding of the content of each Show is impacted by the underlying significance of ghosts as both past and present, celebratory and sinister, living and dead. The ghostly nature of characters such as Leofstane, Walworth, Faringdon is, I suggest, central to the action of both of the aforementioned Shows-

The Ghosts of *Chruso-thriambos*: Stow, Fitz-Alwine and Faringdon

The crowds that lined up at Baynard’s Castle to see the Lord Mayor’s Show on 29 October 1611 were witnesses to a curious spectacle: that of a powerful living

man being greeted at the dock by a powerful dead man. The former was Sir James Pemberton, Goldsmith and newly elected Lord Mayor of London. The latter was Henry Fitz-Alwine, the very first Lord Mayor and some four hundred years deceased. Fitz-Alwine – or Leofstane, as he is termed throughout – presents a rare example of a self-aware ghost brazenly travelling through the streets of Protestant London: it may “seeme strange unto yon ... that in this manner I presume to saluce yee”, Leofstane acknowledges, but “the powerfull command that raised me from my grave at *Bermondsey*, enstruces mee ... [that I] should attend this day” to guide Pemberton through the celebrations laid on in his honour (sig. B2r). Although the character of the dead mayor, portrayed by Goldsmith apprentice and actor-shareholder of the King’s Men John Lowin, does not represent the historical figure that Munday originally intended (something I will return to shortly), the role he plays in this scene, acting as a guide to the new mayor Pemberton, neatly encapsulates the unique moral role that ghosts play in Munday’s *Chruso-thriambos*.

Chruso-thriambos is an extravagant and multi-faceted street pageant that merits a brief explanation. Commissioned by the Goldsmiths’ Company to commemorate Pemberton’s election as Lord Mayor, the Show is, unsurprisingly, written as a love-letter to the “Triumphes” of gold. The theatrics begin with a spectacular water show that features “Divers Sea-fights and skirmishes”, actors playing the “*Indian King and his Queene*” mounted on “Golden Leopardes”, and barges laden with “Ingots of Gold and Silver” (sig. A3v), all of which follow the new mayor along the Thames to Baynard’s, where he lands and is greeted by Leofstane in the aforementioned reanimation scene. From there the procession makes its way to St Paul’s, accompanied by lavish pageant carts including a grand “Triumphall Chariot” featuring “the shapes of king Richard the first ... and

King John his brother” (sig. B3). At the churchyard the procession halts so that Pemberton may attend mass, following which he and Leofstane convene with the figure of Time. In the presence of the mayor and those in attendance, Time proceeds to bring back former mayor Nicholas Faringdon from the dead. After initial confusion, the dead man is pleased to be part of the celebration, and joins with the procession as they head to Cheapside, where sits the centrepiece of the entire Show, an immense “Orferie” in the shape of a “Mount of Golde” (sig. A4). The Orferie depicts the methods by which precious metals make their way from the mines to London, and is large enough to contain figures representing characters as diverse as miners, “*Terra*” (“Mother of al Golde”) and even a “*Lydian* King” who has been “Metamorphosed into a Stone” (sig. B). This grand sight represents the Show’s central theme – the role of the Goldsmiths in London’s economic prosperity. It showcases not only the Goldsmiths’ primary resource but also their wealth: the figure of Time (who guides the procession) reminds his audience that despite the expense of the Show, it is “the Gold-Smithes sole Society. / That in this Triumphe beares the Pursse for all” (sig. C2v). The procession ends outside Pemberton’s home, where he receives advice from Time, Leofstane and Faringdon. Finally, Faringdon imparts upon the new mayor, representative of the wealthy Goldsmiths and “Lieutenant to your King”, the importance of “Charitie” and retaining virtue “as beseemes a Maioralitie” (sig. C4r).

As Faringdon’s moral implies, *Chruso-thriambos* represents what Philip Robinson deems “a timely intervention in socio-political issues of the period”, predominantly economic ones.³⁶ Few critics thus far, however, have considered the significance of the fact that the man delivering that message to the new

³⁶ Philip Robinson, “Mayoral pageantry and early modern London, 1605-1639”, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2009.

mayor is the ghost of a dead one. These two observations are not, I believe, unrelated, but rather the role of the deceased mayor is integral to our understanding of the political message of Munday's pageant. *Chruso-thriambos* features perhaps the largest number of ghostly characters in any of Munday's Lord Mayor's Shows, including two former mayors – Leofstane and Faringdon, a company of “ten Halberdiers” (sig. A3v), and the carriage containing Kings Richard I and John. During the course of the pageant these reanimated corpses act as powerful signifiers for a number of different contemporary socio-political issues related to the role of the mayor in general and the Goldsmiths specifically. Unfortunately for Munday, his misguided reliance on Stow in the characterisation of Leofstane results in Munday's predecessor figuratively haunting the pageant as well, which somewhat undermines the primary message of the Show concerning the economy of gold and the role that the Goldsmiths and other civic authorities must play in the distribution of wealth. The manner in which Munday depicts his other reanimated dead mayors also touches upon debates concerning the questionable morality of mining and, to a lesser extent, discourses of necromancy and witchcraft under James I. Although such concerns are seemingly discredited in the context of the wider celebration, the layers of meaning surrounding Leofstane, Faringdon and their ilk undoubtedly influence our understanding of the text.

The most significant influence that Munday's inheritance of Stow's *Survey* in 1605 had on *Chruso-thriambos* may be observed in the character of Leofstane, the very first ghost that Munday depicts in the pageant – and one which led an uncommonly multi-faceted afterlife. Personifying the very first Lord Mayor of London, Munday's Leofstane is the most politically and historically important ghost in the Show. A decidedly impolitic mis-ascription on Munday's

part, however, also meant Leofstane was the most controversial ghost that Munday ever wrote, and led to a number of inter-guild conflicts following the pageant. In the 1598 *Survey* Stow identifies Leofstane as “*H. Fitz Alwin, Fitz Liefstane* Goldsmith”, London’s first Lord Mayor, who “continued M. from the first of *Richard* the first, untill the fifteenth of king *John*, which was twentie foure yeares and more” (sig. Ee2r). So it was that when Munday came to write *Chruso-thriambos* in 1611 he, on Stow’s authority, unequivocally identified Leofstane as “a Gold-Smith, the first Provost that bare authoritie in London” (sig. A3v), both in his introduction to the published work and in the very first speech of the pageant, in which Leofstane emphatically introduces himself as “the first [mayor], being named Leofstane, and a Gold-Smith by my profession” (sig. B2r).

As it transpired, however, Munday, dug up the wrong ghost. In the introduction to the published edition of *Himatia-Poleos* (1614),³⁷ Munday is forced to write a lengthy apology to the Goldsmiths and the Drapers explaining that it came to light following his 1611 pageant that he had mistaken one dead mayor – “*Henrie Fitz-Alwine, Fitz-Leofstane*”, Goldsmith – for another with the same name – “*Henrie Fitz-Alwine*, a brother of the olde Drapers” and first Lord Mayor of London (sig. A4r).³⁸ The figure of Leofstane in *Chruso-thriambos* thus presents a decidedly un-historical conflation of two entirely separate figures. As might be imagined, Munday’s mistake kicked up no small amount of controversy, and actually triggered what may well be the first documented case in English drama of several different parties disputing the ownership of a ghost. Alongside the Drapers and Goldsmiths, Guilds who do not appear to have given

³⁷ Munday, *Himatia-Poleos. The Triumphs of olde Draperie, or the rich Clothing of England* (London: Printed by Edward Allde, 1614).

³⁸ Tracey Hill also discusses Munday’s faux-pas in *Anthony Munday and civic culture: theatre, history and power in early modern London 1580-1633* (Manchester: MUP, 2004), 166-71.

the matter much consideration before *Chruso-thriambos* – who, indeed, had not questioned the same mistake when it was published in Munday’s source, Stow’s *Survey* (sig. R3r) – now clamoured for a full-scale investigation into Fitz-Alwine’s true historical affiliation:

What offence then may the Companie of *Mercers* take, who make challenge likewise to the very same man [...]? Or that of the *Fishmongers*, who deeme their worthy *Wallworth*, the first Knighted Maior in the field, to be the same man also [...]? (sig. A4v)

According to Munday, “diverse other good Antiquaries” were called in to get to the bottom of things, including one “especiall Gentleman in the imagined injured Companie of Goldsmiths (who tooke no meane paines to be resolved in this case)” and a renowned herald and historian William Camden, the latter of whom eventually “confirmed him [Fitz-Alwine] to be none other than a Draper” (sig. A4v).

The livery companies were not, of course, competing solely for the right to Fitz-Alwine’s “ghost” so much as to Fitz-Alwine’s *memory* – the right to claim the legacy of the first Lord Mayor as their own. And yet the significance of Munday’s presentation of the ghost in 1611 should not be understated. The ghost of Leofstane is, after all, the source of the dispute: no one seems to have publicly argued the point prior to *Chruso-thriambos*. Moreover, despite the fact that raising a ghost in a theatrical setting is very different to resurrecting the memory of a dead man through the course of debate, in the case of Leofstane the two processes went hand-in-hand. This is indicated by the fact that the Drapers’ Guild chose to commemorate their victory in the dispute by proudly re-resurrecting Fitz-Alwine in two consecutive pageants – *Himatia-Poleos* and *Metropolis coronata*. The dead mayor is featured prominently in both of these

Munday-penned Shows, which frame the Drapers' association with Fitz-Alwine in terms of a victory over other, less historically-rooted companies. Hill has observed that Fitz-Alwine "gets more than a passing reference"³⁹ in *Metropolis coronata*, reciting a lengthy speech in which he boldly identifies himself with the twice-elected Drapers (sig. Br). In the context of the clash with the Goldsmiths, the ghost's reference in *Himatia-Poleos* to the Goldsmiths' wares seems particularly cutting: "Englands Draperie, / More worth than gaudie braverie, / Of Silken twine, Silver and Golde" (sig. Cr).

Munday, however, having dug up a pair of ghosts and an inter-guild conflict, is singularly unwilling to lay matters to rest once and for all. Indeed, the confidence with which Munday (re)claims Fitz-Alwine for the Drapers in the 1614 and 1615 pageants only serves to highlight a deeper uncertainty on the writer's part that becomes clear in the *Himatia-Poleos* apology: the Fitz-Alwine that Munday ultimately leaves to posterity is the product of twofold equivocation. First, in a theatrical sense, the depiction of ghosts in the pageants – figures who cheerfully describe themselves as both alive and dead – is inherently equivocal. Secondly, and in a deeper political sense, Munday's apology simultaneously supports and undermines the claim of the Drapers to Fitz-Alwine. In the ostensibly pro-Draper 1614 apology, Munday's brazen dismissal of any claims that the Mercers, Fishmongers and Goldsmiths may make to Fitz-Alwine's memory is tempered by a curiously nonpartisan conclusion in which Munday disregards the evidence provided by Cambden *et al* and claims that "no certain assurance could be had" of the real Fitz-Alwine's affiliation, "but that it remained doubtful" (sig. Br).

³⁹ Tracy Hill, *Anthony Munday*, 172.

If one may discern in Munday's words here a suggestion of careful equivocation, it may be because, as Hill suggests, Munday probably saw political duplicity as being in his best interests. As London's premier pageant poet, his writing is inevitably "informed by the specific requirements of that year's agenda-setters".⁴⁰ Thus, Munday, with one eye on his future employment, may have thought it prudent to remain every bit as equivocal as the very ghost that he depicts as speaking for two separate companies over the course of three pageants. After all, he would not have wanted to risk offending any company likely to offer him work in the years ahead, nor would Munday have wished to insult his current employers. On this occasion, Munday's noncommittal attitude concerning Fitz-Alwine seems to have paid off for him: he continued to write mayoral pageants for various guilds for the remainder of his career.

Munday was not only involved in controversy surrounding the memory of Fitz-Alwine, but Munday's treatment of the memory of his deceased friend Stow during *Chruso-thriambos* and *Himatia-Poleos* is also equivocal, as Munday's response to the controversy created by the Goldsmiths' pageant serves to both affirm and deny Stow's legacy. The embarrassment – the "blemish on mine own brow" (*Himatia-Poleos*, sig. A4r), as Munday puts it – of having inadvertently offended the very Drapers' Company of which he was himself a member, may go some way towards explaining why Munday is so quick to shift the blame onto his predecessor, diverting attention "away from his own hideous mortification on to Stow's deficiencies as an Historian".⁴¹ Munday's 1614 apology in *Himatia-Poleos* would have readers believe that the writer doubted Stow all along, and that the staged resurrection of a *second* ghost in the pageant – Sir Nicholas

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 168.

Faringdon – is a direct response to the uncertainty of Stow’s text. Given that Fitz-Alwine’s affiliation “remained doubtful between both the [Drapers’ and Goldsmiths’] Societies” (sig. Br), Munday attests, he decided to raise a different ghost entirely from the grave later in the Show – one who was certainly a Goldsmith – “to cut off all such contentious questions” (sig. Br). Whether or not Munday’s claims here are true is questionable: if Munday had been uncertain then why, one might ask, did he include Fitz-Alwine in the Show in the first place? Nevertheless, Munday reiterates the point by reminding readers of a marginal note that attributes to Stow a speech made by Time which honours Fitz-Alwine as a Goldsmith (sig. A4r).

Munday may attest to Stow’s great “care and endeavour” and claims that “no such error escaped from him wilfully or willingly” in *Himatia-Poleos* (sig. A4v), but it is ironic that he seeks to account for tarnishing the memory of one dead man by raising the ghost of another whose memory he also blemishes. “What more free confession can any man make”, Munday pleads, “than of his blinde misleading by a blinder guide?” (sig. A4v). The desire to save face at Stow’s expense seems to manifest itself in Munday’s vainglorious pronouncement at the beginning of the 1618 edition of the *Survey* that he will remedy anything he finds “amisse” in Stow’s original – including, one would presume, given the very public embarrassment Munday had endured following *Chruso-thriambos*, the identity of London’s first Lord Mayor.⁴² Far from clarifying matters, however, Munday – whether through accident or design – only creates more confusion: he leaves unedited a clear reference to “the first Maier of London was a Gold-smith” named “Henry Fitz Alewin, Fitz Leafstane” (sig. Oov)

⁴² Stow, *The Survey of London: Containing, The Originall, Antiquitie, Encrease, and more Moderne Estate of the sayd Famous Citie*, ed. Anthony Munday (London: Printed by George Purslowe, 1618), sig. §2v.

but toward the end, in the section on the “Temporall Government” of London, he also categorically states that the “first maior of London” was “Henry Fitz-Alwin, Draper” (sig. Nnn2r).⁴³ This leads to a confusing situation in which Munday’s Fitz-Alwine is a Goldsmith in 1611, a Draper by 1614, and a member of both guilds again in 1618.

Despite the controversy, Leofstane’s historical identity is arguably less important to *Chruso-thriambos* than the fact that he is raised from the dead in the first place. Whether one takes Munday at his word or not, his assertion that he wrote Faringdon into the pageant in response to the uncertainty surrounding Leofstane suggests that Munday was determined, no matter what, to include a ghostly Goldsmith and/or a scene of resurrection in the Show. Indeed, Munday appears to have had ghosts prominently in mind during the writing of *Chruso-thriambos*, and Faringdon was ultimately only one of a number of spectral characters included in the final production. Leofstane is accompanied at Baynard’s Castle by a guard of “ten Halberdiers”, all of whom, it is implied, are resurrected for the pageant: “these my followers attend mee now”, proclaims Leofstane, “as in my time of authority they did” (sig. B2r). The procession through London also includes a Chariot containing “the shapes of king *Richard* the first ... and King John his Brother” (sig. A3v-A4r). Munday fussily clarifies that these monarchs are not *actual* ghosts by explicitly pointing out the artifice of their representation: they are merely “supposed shapes” (sig. B3r).⁴⁴ His reasons for making this distinction are unclear, because shortly after these figures have been introduced Time groups them with “good Faringdon” (sig. B3v) – who is treated as the genuine article throughout the Show – and in doing

⁴³ Munday reproduces the 1618 entry in his later edition of the *Survey* (London: Printed for Nicholas Bourn, and to be sold at his Shop at the South Entrance of the Royal Exchange, 1633), sig. Zz4v.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of spirits used purposefully on stage instead of ghosts in Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* see Chapter 3.

so implies that the “supposed shapes” might have been similarly raised from the dead. “Goe Faringdon”, Time instructs, “There in that Chariot is thy place preparte” (sig. Cr).⁴⁵ The inclusion of all of these ghostly figures might tell us more about Munday’s psyche than it does about the message of *Chruso-thriambos* itself. As Daryl Palmer observes, Munday once disguised himself in print under the pseudonym “Lazarus Pyott”, an apparent Biblical reference and something which may suggest a pre-existing fascination with ideas of death and resurrection,⁴⁶ although “it would be difficult to speculate on the writer’s mind” without firmer evidence.⁴⁷ As it pertains to the Show itself, however, the sheer number of living dead featured in the pageant suggests a deeper and more immediate importance behind their inclusion that goes beyond questions of Munday’s personal artistic tastes.

The key to interpreting this underlying significance is, I suggest, the scene of Faringdon’s revivification. Faringdon is the most prominently featured ghost in the entire pageant, and the scene in which he rises from the dead in St Paul’s churchyard presents as one of the major focal points of the entire Show the only instance of resurrection to occur during the course of the pageant itself. This is also, therefore, the first point in the pageant in which Munday directly addresses the idea that dead men are raised specifically for the purposes of entertainment – something merely alluded to in the prior scene involving Leofstane – and, surprisingly, confronts what that might entail in practical and

⁴⁵ It is entirely possible that Time is indicating to Faringdon a different chariot to the one containing kings Richard and John. The pageant procession consisted of a number of different carts, after all. However, Time’s speech which honours the two kings and draws everyone’s attention to a specific carriage segues immediately into a description of Faringdon, who Time “may not wel omit, /Because I thinke him for thi triumph fit” (sig. B4v). The text thus heavily implies that Faringdon’s “place” is both literally and figuratively alongside the “shapes” of Richard and John.

⁴⁶ Palmer, “Metropolitan Resurrection”, 374. A fuller account of Munday’s pseudonym can be found in Celeste Turner’s “‘Lazarus Pyott’ and Other Inventions of Anthony Munday”, *Philological Quarterly*, 42 (1963), 532-41.

⁴⁷ Palmer, “Metropolitan Resurrection”, 374.

ethical terms. That the scene dramatises the act of reanimating a corpse is itself a rarity in early modern theatre, but that it does so with consideration for the effect that such activity might have on the revenant in question offers an intriguingly nuanced departure from the otherwise ostentatious festivity of the Show. While brief, the scene nevertheless shapes the manner in which audiences might perceive resurrected characters for the duration of the pageant by presenting Faringdon in terms as problematic symbolically as Leofstane is politically.

In context of the pageant narrative, Faringdon's resurrection in front of crowds of onlookers is – on the surface, at least – something to be celebrated. Leofstane first brings Pemberton to an elaborate reconstruction of Faringdon's burial site, described in Munday's *précis* of the pageant as "an ancient Toombe or Monument, standing in apt place appointed for it" (sig. A3v), which functions as a visual indicator of Faringdon's prestige and the prestige that the Lord Mayor in general might expect as a result of his civic power. There the new mayor meets the character of Time, who explains that he intends to awaken the tomb's occupant, Faringdon, who is himself described in ways that stress the importance of the Lord Mayor as part of London itself. The imminent resurrection is feted as the return of a champion of the city: "These gates he built", Time trumpets, "this ward of him took name" (sig. B3v).

It soon becomes evident, however, that this ostensibly affirmative message belies a subversive undercurrent that becomes clear in the interactions between Time and the ghosts that he raises. Faringdon's resurrection is anticipated by Time and Leofstane reiterating "great Time's controule" over the dead (sig. B2v), even those "long since gone / Out of this world" (sig. B3v), and Time offers us some idea of the extent of his "controule"

in describing himself as one who “Abridges, or gives scope, as likes me best” (sig. B2v). “Pardon me then, that I durst breath a word / In contestation” (sig. B2v), responds Leofstane. The back-and-forth between the two conveys simply enough the notion that Time deserves respect in matters of life and death, but, no matter how jovial the delivery of the actors might have been, the tone of the exchange is inevitably augmented by the apparent trepidation in Leofstane’s fawning reply. The dead mayor, it seems, does not wish for his revival to be “abridge[d]”. Time silences Leofstane (“Enough, no more”) and proceeds to rouse Faringdon from his slumber by commanding the dead man to “Arise, arise, I say, good *Faringdon*”, before he “strieth on the Tombe with his Silver wand” (sig. B3v). The effect, according to the pamphlet text, is immediate, and Faringdon “ariseth” physically from his tomb. Like Leofstane, in his appearance the dead man bears no signs of death or decomposition. Unlike Leofstane, however, who expresses pleasure at the “gay sights as nere I saw before” (sig. B2v), the freshly disinterred Faringdon is initially confused and reluctant, if not hostile:

Astonishment and frightful wonder,
Shakes and splits my soule in sunder.
Cannot graves containe their dead,
Where long they have lien buried,
But to Triumphs, sports, and shows
They must be raisd? Alacke, God knows
They count their quiet slumber blest
(sigs. B3v-B4r)

Time, it seems, has resurrected a man who did not wish to be dug up. Faringdon’s anxiety is only temporary, but it presents a jarring shift in tone from the general amicability of his fellow deceased mayor, Leofstane, and it is not immediately obvious why Munday might choose to showcase an irritable dead mayor as part of the festivities. Palmer suggests that Faringdon’s bewilderment,

an “insight into human nature”, is used for the “more serious purpose of justifying the action” of the scene, and posits that by drawing parallels between the raising of the mayor to office and the raising of the dead, Munday “assure[s] his audience that this spectacle of resurrection was not in vain”.⁴⁸ Palmer’s theory might find support in Faringdon cheerfully voicing his intention, once he understands the occasion for which he has been resurrected, to “doe what service else I may” (sig. B4r). Faringdon’s abrupt change of heart does not, however, negate the implications of his initial outburst that the dead man has been dragged from his “blest” slumber against his will – an idea that becomes only more pronounced when Time beseeches the dead mayor to “recollect thy spirits from feare” (sig. B4r). The very acknowledgment, after all, that fear might have crept into the proceedings undermines what is supposed to be a joyous occasion. What is more, Faringdon’s behaviour raises the question of whether or not his fellow ghosts in the Show suffered the same disorientation when they were raised from the dead. The ghosts of Leofstane and Kings John and Richard themselves offer no clue that this might have been the case, but the fact that Faringdon’s initial upset springs from temporal confusion strongly suggests that the others may well have suffered similar ill effects: their deaths do, after all, predate Faringdon’s by a significant margin. Given the uncomfortable implications that it raises, then, it is therefore difficult to accept that Faringdon’s confusion is solely intended to help ‘justify’ the action of *Chruso-thriambos*’ tomb scene. Instead, Faringdon’s alarm imbues the entire scene with negative connotations that are wholly at odds with the tone of positivity that frames the activity at St Paul’s, and in doing so, I posit, comments

⁴⁸ Ibid., 377

on, without necessarily justifying, the manner in which he was brought into the Show.

The manner in which Munday depicts Faringdon's initial reaction to being resurrected forces his audience, I suggest, to confront the facts of the situation, which is, as Robinson clarifies, that Faringdon is not "a mere ... spirit, but the actual, physical presence of the dead: a corpse whose grave could not contain him".⁴⁹ Robinson understands the horrific connotations of Faringdon's use in the pageant to be Munday's attempt at reminding his audience to see beyond the "ceremonial shows celebrating civic greatness", and look instead at a city "where the dead choke up the streets".⁵⁰ This interpretation does, however, rather give the impression that Faringdon's emergence from the grave is the result of an unhappy burial-related accident, like the incursions of many cadavers into local nasal passages courtesy of London's rapidly-filling churchyards,⁵¹ when in fact the opposite was true. Faringdon's grave could certainly keep his dead body in – he says himself that his slumber was "free from disturbance" (sig. B4r). What Faringdon's grave could *not* do was keep living bodies away: Faringdon did not dig out, he was dug up. Under this interpretation, the manner in which Faringdon is resurrected – uprooted from his grave in forceful fashion and compelled to take part in a ritualised celebration – makes his presence in the pageant unpalatable, even horrific, and becomes central to the audience's understanding of both the goings-on at St Paul's and the message of the Show itself. Munday encourages his audience to see the horror of the scene not in Faringdon's corpse *per se*, but in the act of

⁴⁹ Robinson, "Mayoral pageantry", 96.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See Chapter 1 for a full description of the problem of over-filled graveyards in early modern London.

resurrecting it in the first place – the act of digging up something or someone that should have remained buried.

The *something* in this case is the corpse of a man, and the most immediate and obvious connotations inherent in Time's wand-waving disinterment of Faringdon are of witchcraft and necromancy – subjects that were as contentious and as disquieting to the early modern imagination as that of ghosts. Although a broader study of the discussions surrounding witchcraft and associated practices lies beyond the scope of this thesis, the significance of witchcraft in England between the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries should not be understated. As Malcolm Gaskill has argued, the belief in witchcraft was uniquely intertwined with the innermost workings of society: "witch-trials cut across the complexity of daily life, exposing the grain of politics, culture, and belief, and channels of communication between them".⁵² Witchcraft undoubtedly had its sceptics, including notable writers such as Reginald Scot, George Gifford and Thomas Ady who contended that "The Grand Errour of these latter Ages is ascribing power to Witches" (sig. A3)⁵³ but the prevailing attitude towards witches, bolstered by trials and executions across Europe, was that they posed a real and present danger in everyday life.

One of the key figures in perpetuating the belief in witches was none other than King James himself, who wrote his widely-read treatise *Daemonologie* (1597) as a vehement response to Scot's denigration of the "bawdie discourse" of witchcraft. James argued against Scot's "damnable opinions", and his treatise prompted a great number of works by writers such as

⁵² Gaskill, Malcolm. "Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory in Seventeenth Century England", from *The Historical Journal*, 50/2 (2007), 289-308, 291.

⁵³ Thomas Ady, *A candle in the dark shewing the divine cause of the distractions of the whole nation of England and of the Christian world* (London: Printed for Robert Ibbitson, 1655). See also Reginald Scot, *The discoverie of witchcraft* (London: by Henry Denham, 1584); George Gifford, *A discourse of the subtile practises of devilles by witches and sorcerers* (London: by T. Orwin, 1587).

William Perkins and Thomas Potts, who supported James' opinions in books and published accounts of witch trials "that witchcraft, and Witches have bene, and are" as "clearelie proved by the Scriptures" and by "dailie experience and confessions".⁵⁴ Although it is doubtful that the average citizen in Munday's London would have had first-hand experience of witchcraft on a "dailie" basis, they certainly had regular exposure to a wealth of secondary material responding to the discourse of witchcraft. The bogey of witchcraft was frequently alluded to in theatrical works from the period, most famously Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Middleton's *The Witch*, but also, notably, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which was first performed in 1611, and with which audiences would certainly have been familiar upon seeing *Chruso-thriambos*. The place of witches in the early modern imagination is encapsulated by the terrifying power of Shakespeare's "damned witch Sycorax" who committed "mischiefs manifold" (1.2.311-12), and Prospero, who exerts awesome power over the land and seas.⁵⁵ *Chruso-thriambos* responds to the same supernatural anxiety as *The Tempest* – and may have even taken inspiration from the popularity of Shakespeare's play.

Given the prevalent anxieties concerning witches in Munday's London, Faringdon's explicit resurrection scene cannot help but evoke flashes of necromancy – one of the most common practices associated with witchcraft, and one of the most feared. James dedicates an entire chapter in *Daemonologie* to the "black & unlawfull science" of "Necromancie" as practiced by witches, in which he compares the practitioners to "Swine [that] wortes uppe the graves" (sig. Cr, l2r). Witches dig up the dead, explains James, for two

⁵⁴ King James I, *Daemonologie in forme of a dialogue* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1597), sig. Bv; William Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art of witchcraft* (Cambridge: Printed by Cantrel Legge, 1608); Thomas Potts, *The wonderfull discouerie of witches in the countie of Lancaster* (London: Printed by W. Stansby, 1613).

⁵⁵ See Chapter 1 for a brief discussion of Prospero's power to raise spirits.

reasons: either “to joynt dead corpses, & to make powders thereof” or to allow the Devil to “enter in a dead bodie” and thereby communicate with him (sig. G2r). James also distinguishes between the necromancy practiced by witches (who are “servantes onelie, and slaves to the Devil”) and that practiced by “*Magiciens*” (who “are his maisters and commanders”, but at the ultimate cost “of their body & soule”) (sigs. B4v-Cr). Necromancy remained enough of a public fear after James came to power in England that in 1604 the King passed an Act of parliament⁵⁶ that made necromantic practises a felony punishable by death. The Act forbade the taking up of

any dead man, woman, or child out of his, her or their grave, or
any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone,
or any other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in
any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment
(IV/2: 1028-9)

How, then, would the public view Time’s theatrics at Faringdon’s tomb in light of the anti-witch rhetoric propagated by King James? By James’ definition, Time’s act of “taking up” the dead Faringdon – while not flagrantly blasphemous – must necessarily be demonic because only God has the power to revive the dead (*Daemonologie*, sig. Gr). In that sense, then, the scene certainly sits uncomfortably in relation to early modern law. The suggestion of necromancy is not entirely incompatible with the churchyard setting, either. In fact, the location of Faringdon’s resurrection strikes a chord with James’s assertion in *Daemonologie* that witches tend to carry out their necromantic rituals “ofttest in the Churches, where they conveene” (sig. Gr). Middleton would exploit that particular item of witch-lore in the same location two years later in *The*

⁵⁶ “An Act against Conjuracion Witchcraft and dealing with evill and wicked Spirits”, 1604 (1 Jac. I, c. 12), in *The statutes of the realm (1225-1713) Printed by command of His Majesty King George the Third*, 10 vols. (London: George Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1819), 4:1028-9.

Triumphes of Truth, presenting the personification of Envy “eating of a human heart” (sig. B2r), in comparison to which Time reanimating Faringdon seems positively tame. What is more, the total control that Time has over the dead men that he has raised is loosely reminiscent of James’ description of the “*magiciens*” who exert mastery over the dead men that they raise. Leofstane’s opening speech to Pemberton refers to the “powerfull command that raised me” and the “further employment” that Time has for him (*Chruso-thriambos*, sig. B2r). On the occasions when Time delivers his instructions in front of the audience, his words are strict imperatives: “Leofstane, I charge thee stay” (sig. B2v); “Goe, *Faringdon*” (sig. Cr). Much depends on how the actor playing Time reads such lines, of course, and so we cannot ever know exactly how Munday intended them to be understood, but although lines such as Time directing Faringdon – “There in that Chariot is thy place preparte” (sig. Cr) – may be spoken with varying degrees of authority, from polite notification to inexorable demands, it is difficult to imagine it as an non-compulsory request.

By far the most prominent suggestion of witchcraft in the scene, however, is that of Time’s silver wand, which Time “strieth on the Tombe” (in a potentially violent-looking movement) to conjure Faringdon from the grave (sig. B3v). The showmanship that such stage directions – and the theatrical tool itself – suggests that the magic power it signifies would have been visible to everyone watching the events at St Paul’s – even those members of the audience out of earshot, unable to hear the speeches. It is true to say that wands were by no means part and parcel of witchcraft stereotypes in the early modern imagination as they might be today, although the notion was not without precedent: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, translated into English in 1567, describes the powerful witch Circe transforming men into swine with one stroke of her

magic wand,⁵⁷ while James also refers to the “wandes” of magicians as tools that might be used to confound “mennes outward senses” in *Daemonologie*, sigs. D3v-D4r. Nevertheless, wands were undoubtedly commonly associated with magic in theatre from the period. In 1607, for instance, Thomas Campion includes a “magick wand” in a courtly masque for the king. The wand is wielded not by a witch, but by the personification of Night, who performs magical feats such as transforming trees into dancing masquers.⁵⁸ In the same year as *Chruso-thriambos*, theatregoers witnessed Prospero in *The Tempest* wave his staff and famously claim to have opened “Graves at [his] command” and “Waked their sleepers ... and let ‘em forth” (5.1.53-4). Munday certainly seems to have drawn inspiration from Prospero’s staff in imagining the Genius of *Chrysanaleia* using a similar “powerfull wand” which “in a minute can command / Graves, Vaults, and deepes yield up their dead” (sig. B4v) – something he subsequently demonstrates by resurrecting William Walworth, some “two hundred yeeres” dead (sig. Cr). Given the association in the early modern imagination between magic and staves or wands, Munday’s decision to arm Time with a wand reads as a conscious decision to indicate in a powerfully visual way the use of magic in the resurrection process – thereby invoking connotations of necromancy.

However, there are also problems with interpreting Time’s graveyard manner as an allusion to witchcraft – not least of all in the fact that the purpose of necromancy is, Perkins tells us, to conjure “counterfeit apparitions of the dead”,⁵⁹ but there is nothing in the language of Faringdon or Leofstane to suggest that either one is any other than the genuine article. Indeed,

⁵⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: By Willyam Seres, 1567), sigs. Bb1r-Bb1v.

⁵⁸ Campion, *The discription of a maske* (London: Imprinted by Iohn Windet for Iohn Brown, 1607), sig. C3r.

⁵⁹ Perkins, *A discourse*, sig. H3v.

Faringdon's first disorientated lines in the pageant depend upon him being a revived dead man. Moreover, although the circumstances surrounding the way in which Time resurrects Faringdon (and by extension, all other ghostly figures in the Show) are dubious, the fact remains that neither ghost is put to the sort of dark and mysterious uses written about in *Daemonologie*. Faringdon, Leofstane and their ilk are not asked to "give such answers, of the event of battels, of maters concerning the estate of commonwelths, and such like other great questions" – all that is required of them by Time is to accompany the new Lord Mayor. This they do willingly, with the two former mayors expressing regret that they "needs must part" (sig. C4r).

The circumstances of Faringdon's resurrection thus bring to the surface the sinister connotations surrounding the Show's use of dead historical figures, thereby establishing an air of complex – if not necessarily transgressive – ambiguity. Munday presents the ghosts as neither assuredly godly nor appreciably demonic, both at home in the present yet belonging to the past, under Time's control but exercising free will. At the centre of this ambiguity Munday's ghosts present the ultimate paradox, being at once manifestly alive and undeniably dead.

To Munday's audience, this paradox was expressed visually. As the procession left the churchyard, those in attendance would have witnessed Pemberton and his entourage surrounded by ghosts – those of Leofstane, the armed guards, the kings in the chariot and freshly-raised Faringdon: a tableau of the living and the dead in which the differences between the two would not have been immediately obvious. That the visual mechanics of a pageant could be used to elegantly amalgamate life and death was clearly not lost on Munday. He would repeat the tableau five years later in *Chrysanaleia* when London's

Genius raises former mayor William Walworth from his tomb, alongside a host of long dead aldermen “raysde by me their love to yeelde” (sig. C2r), for the benefit of new mayor. In this pageant, the dead mayor takes the form of a “marble statue” in Walworth’s likeness that rests on top of the grave in the manner of a transi tomb rather than an actual corpse as with Faringdon (sig. B3r), but the figure remains unmistakably a ghost, one “above two hundred yeeres, [...] / Hath silent slept, and raysd this day” (sig. Cr). The company of living and dead men then proceed from St Paul’s, echoing the post-churchyard living dead tableau of *Chruso-thriambos*.

The visual blurring of life and death that Munday creates in *Chruso-thriambos*, it must be observed, may very well have been lost on the majority of viewers. In his discussion of Munday’s pageants in general, Sergei Lobanov-Rotovskiy has differentiated between the series of “emblematic tableaux” that Munday creates in his pageants, and the character-driven, narratively cohesive dramatic entertainments one might have seen in the playhouses.⁶⁰ That distinction is particularly apt here, because the effect of the singular living dead tableau Munday creates in his 1611 pageant at St Paul’s would have been decontextualized within minutes of leaving the churchyard. As Hill reminds us, “only those who followed the procession from start to finish (the Lord Mayor himself and other chief dignitaries) were able to see the Show in its entirety; for most onlookers, the Show was witnessed in a fragmented form”.⁶¹ Those who did not witness Faringdon rise from the grave, or hear Leofstane and Time trumpet the presence of ghosts in the pageant, would surely not have perceived the characters heading towards Cheapside – removed from the context of St

⁶⁰ Sergei Lobanov-Rotovskiy, “*The Triumphes of Gold: economic authority in the Jacobean Lord Mayor’s Show*”, *English Literary History*, 60 (1993), 879-98, 879-80.

⁶¹ Hill, *Anthony Munday*, 80.

Paul's – in terms of life and death. The synopsis of the tomb scene in the published pamphlet is oddly lacking in detail when compared to the lavish description of the Orferie that follows it, and refers only vaguely to “the services thereto appointed”. The tomb set itself, we may infer, is mobile enough to be “standing in apt place”, and may have been linked to the chariot containing kings Richard and John, but beyond that we know little of its use in the remaining procession. It is therefore difficult to judge the proportion of Munday's audience that might have appreciated the post-churchyard ambiguity.

If we turn briefly to *Chrysanaleia*, however, we may observe in the Fishmongers' Show a similarly ambiguous juxtaposition of living and dead characters – one that may offer some idea of how visible the tableau effect in *Chruso-thriambos* might have been, and what place it had in the message of the wider procession. In the 1616 Show Munday re-uses the tomb device at St Paul's, and specifies in his description of the scene that the party leaving the churchyard is accompanied by “The Bower and Tombe” from which Walworth was raised, which “are likewise borne before him, for his more convenient returne to rest againe” (sig. B3r). The company of living and dead men thus bring the graveyard context of their association along with them for the rest of the city to witness. Even more significantly, the tomb that accompanies them has become symbolically different to that which they originally meet at St Paul's: minus the “statue” on top of it, the tomb which follows the new Mayor through the city becomes anonymous – the coffin could be anybody's. Those audience members who did not see Walworth rise (thereby demonstrating that the coffin is his) would have seen instead the newly elected Lord Mayor being followed through the streets by an ominous monument to his mortality.

Alongside the obvious allusions to the temporal nature of human life, Munday's amalgamation of living and dead bodies in *Chrysanaleia* anticipates clearly-defined comments concerning the Lord Mayor's temporal power. The connection is made when Walworth draws his audience's attention to an additional pageant cart that depicts a "*Leman tree*" (a pun on the new mayor's surname) "Neere to the stocke or roote thereof, a goodly Pellicane hath built her nest" (sig. B2r). In early modern symbolic tradition, the (female) pelican was believed to raise her young at the expense of her own life, and was therefore commonly associated with ideas of life beyond death – specifically through self-sacrifice. Munday's summary of the pageant cart characterises the bird as follows: "with her beake she lanceth her brest, and so supplieth that want [of her young] with her owne bloud ... and then, though they survive, the Damme dyeth" (sig. B2r). Through the character of dead former mayor, Munday subsequently draws a parallel between the pelican's sacrifice so that its young might live to the sacrifices that an exemplary mayor should be willing to make in order for his city to thrive. Walworth follows his description of the bird, which "speakes ingeniously / The Character of your authoritie", by relating the "Continuall cares, and many broken sleepes" that the Leman "hardly will avoid this yeere" (sig. C3r). The link between the pelican and civic or spiritual authority was, Palmer writes, "ubiquitous" in early modern England, and the pelican was "A common figure on the pulpit" in relation to teachings on "resurrection and government, sacrifice and surplus".⁶² Munday's reference to the pelican mythos thus imparts the unmistakable message that the "new mayor will be a model of sacrifice for the people of London".⁶³

⁶² Palmer, "Metropolitan Resurrection", 382-384.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 383.

As the sacrificial undertones suggest, there is unquestionably a strong Christian element to the pelican device. Palmer, for instance, reads in the rich symbolic capital of the pelican's life-giving blood a parallel between the mayor and the Eucharist, by which the new mayor is shown to revitalise his city via the symbolic "resurrection" of the Lord Mayor's power in the person of Leman.⁶⁴ Without discounting the "deft substitution of urban authority for divinity and church"⁶⁵ that Palmer proposes, however, I suggest that the "resurrection" in question is primarily as a political event rather than a theological one, and represents not that of a singular Christ-like figure, but that of a greater spirit of mayoral authority. According to Munday, the pelican's death mirrors the "expiration of [the Mayor's term of one] yeare" when "the maine Authoritie of Governement (in him) may be sayd to dye" (*Chrysanaleia*, sig. B2v). Following this "death" however, even though the man himself has departed from the seat of authority, the power that he embodied survives in "other *Pellicans* of the same brood" (sig. B2v). As an allegory for the transfer of civic power from one mayor to the next, the pelican motif therefore draws on contemporary theories of the King's two bodies.⁶⁶ Discourse surrounding the King's two bodies in early modern England is, as Marie Axton explains in her discussion of the idea between the reign of Elizabeth I and James I, a complex matter indeed.⁶⁷ Broadly speaking, however, the central idea throughout its conceptual evolution was that first spelled out by Edmund Plowden:

the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural ... is a Body mortal, subject to all the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 384.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 383.

⁶⁶ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: PUP, 1957); and Glenn Burgess' assessment of the theory as it related early seventeenth century politics in *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to the English Political Thought, 1603-1642* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 163-4.

⁶⁷ Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977) 11-12.

Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident ... But his Body politic is a body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government.⁶⁸

Although the bodies natural and politic are said to “form one unit indivisible”, as Ernst Kantorowicz writes, in the body politic dwell “mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of fragile human nature”, forces which upon the monarch’s death pass immediately to the body natural of the next in line to the throne.⁶⁹ In the case of *Chrysanaleia* then, the immortal body politic is clearly represented by the pelican’s blood, which leaves one body to not only sustain others, but empower them in a cycle of urban authority.

By and large the overall message that Munday’s pelicans impart is a positive one that associates the mayor’s power with the indefatigable God-given authority of the monarch. And yet the image of the pelican in this context remains something of a double-edged sword: for all that it showcases the endurance of the body politic, it also reminds the audience – and the mayor – that his body natural may retain that power for only a short space of time: death is necessary – central, even – to the cycle of power. Munday’s simile is a little strained in this respect – after all, Lord Mayors, unlike kings and queens, were not required to die on the job for their power to transfer to another. So, although a mayor’s corporeal form need not expire sacrificially and pelican-like, it might be said – as indeed Munday does – that the end of a mayor’s elected term sees the power die “*in him*” (my italics). In its wake it leaves behind the very sort of mortal, imperfect body natural represented by the long dead former mayor Walworth, who stands alongside a vacant and anonymous travelling tomb as a

⁶⁸ Edmund Plowden, *Commentaries or Reports* (1816), 212a, cited in Kantorowicz, *Kings Two Bodies*, 7. See also the English translation of the original *Commentaries*: Edmund Plowden, *An exact abridgment in English, of The commentaries, or reports of the learned and famous lawyer, Edmond Plowden, an apprentice of the common law* (London: Printed by R. White and T. Roycroft, 1650).

⁶⁹ Kantorowicz, *King’s Two Bodies*, 9, 7.

vivid reminder to new mayor Leman not only of his own mortality, but of the fact that his authority is only temporary. The tableau of living and dead men that Munday creates in the Fishmongers' Show thus prepares the audience for the Show's ultimate moral regarding the transience of civic authority.

To return, then, to *Chruso-thriambos*, I suggest that when Munday creates a similar tableau in the earlier Show, it is likely that he does so with the same awareness of not only how a juxtaposition of living and dead characters might appear to his audience, but also of how the ambiguity that such a tableau creates might be used to dramatic effect. It is impossible to say for sure whether or not Faringdon, Leofstane and Pemberton were accompanied from the churchyard by the powerful symbol of an empty coffin as Leman and Walworth were (although it is certainly possible). What is certain, on the other hand, is that even if the coffin had remained in the churchyard, thereby limiting the number of audience members who would have made the connection between the living and dead mayors, at least a small number of those watching the proceedings in the immediate aftermath of the churchyard scene would have appreciated the ambiguity that Munday creates – not least of all the most powerful members of the audience, the mayor himself and his attendants. The purpose of the tableau in the Goldsmiths' Show does however differ greatly from that of the Fishmongers' Company in terms of what follows. Instead of pelicans, we have precious metals; instead of a pastoral symbol of affection through sacrifice, we have the Orferie at Cheapside that trumpets extravagance and wealth; instead of pre-empting a commentary on the temporary nature of the Lord Mayor's power, the ambiguous collation of living and dead mayors anticipates a comparison between civic authority and gold itself.

On the one hand, the contrast between the events at St Paul's and Munday's Orferie could not appear to be any greater. While the former scene revolves around death and the supernatural, the Orferie is abuzz with life and human industry – specifically the industry surrounding precious metals. As the centrepiece of the Goldsmiths' Show, the Orferie stands in both its content and sheer size as a figurative and literal testament to the power associated with gold. Located at Cheapside, the economic centre of the city, the vast "Mount of Golde" is crowned by a stylised representation of Mother Earth and her two daughters "*Chrusas*" (Gold) and "*Argurion*" (Silver), who are placed above a collection of characters depicting the industries created in the name of metals, mining, processing and distribution:

Pioners, Miners, and Delvers ... the Finer ... Mint-Maister,
Coyners, Golde-Smithes, Jeweller, Lapaidarie, Pearle-Driller,
Plate-Seller, and suche like, all lively acting their sundry
professions

(sig. A4r)

In addition to all of these bodies were accompanying props including "Furnaces", "Glasses of parting each metal from the other", a "Table, Balance, Weights ... Ingots, Jewelles..." (sig. A4v) all of which were presented on a structure replete with "clifts, crannies, and passable places" to better depict the activities described (sig. A3v). In short, as Robinson succinctly puts it, the Orferie "must have been quite an impressive visual statement".⁷⁰ It is certainly an impressive textual statement, he adds, "with its description taking up the majority" of the published text.⁷¹

The industry represented by the Orferie is nothing if not symbolically appropriate to the procession of living dead mayors. Both, after all, dramatise

⁷⁰ Robinson, "Mayoral Pageantry", 140.

⁷¹ Ibid.

the digging-up of something valuable from the earth: from St Paul's, a former mayor; from the Orferie, gold. Moreover, in both cases the very act of digging-up in question is symbolically problematic. Just as disinterring a dead body raised a number of moral and theological issues in Munday's England, the topic of mining - specifically the morality of the process - was subject to its own complex body of discourse. Indeed, the ethics of mining provoked heated debate in early modern Europe. Although mining, and the metals it provided, were "obviously of practical use", Robinson observes, "the moralities in operation behind the act of mining were less fixed, with many writers describing the act in terms of a highly visible sign of corruption and greed".⁷² The complaints were not restricted to the mining of gold: George Coffin Taylor notes a generally felt "antagonism to mining" in Renaissance writing.⁷³ Citing instances from Chaucer to Milton in which the process of mining is denounced as the source of a multitude of sins, Taylor demonstrates that gold was frequently depicted as "the most corrupting of all forces" and iron and saltpetre as "the origin of all destructive wars".⁷⁴ The mining process itself also came under heavy criticism. Karen Newman has described the enormous effort required to procure even small amounts of unrefined metal – mining necessitated (as it still does today) a large workforce, the extraction and transport of tons upon tons of earth, and the use of poison to cull the metal from the rock.⁷⁵ Early modern writers, aware of the destructive nature of the processes involved, often described mining in terms of a violent and invasive act akin to rape on an innocent body. Shakespeare's Hotspur thinks it great

⁷² Ibid., 145.

⁷³ George Coffin Taylor, "Milton on Mining", *Modern Language Notes*, 45/1 (Jan. 1930), 24-27, 24.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁵ Karen Newman, "'Goldsmith's ware': Equivalence in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside", *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 71/1 (March 2008), 97-113, 98-103.

“pity” that “villainous salt-petre should be digg’d / Out of the bowels of the harmless earth” (1.3.61-2), and his words echo those of Du Bartas,⁷⁶ who decries the assault that mining constitutes against “our mother earth”: “With sacrilegious Tools we rudely rend-her, / And ransak deeply in her bosom tender” (sigs. L3r-L3v).

The criticisms of mining were widespread enough that even those who stood to potentially benefit from the trade precipitated by mining activity were forced to acknowledge the moral confusion that it created. In 1556 when Georgius Agricola set down his highly influential work on mining, *De Re Metallica*, before even arriving at his central argument demonstrating the usefulness of metals (including gold) to a variety of professions, he found it necessary to devote almost an entire book to debunking the “bitter hatred toward metals” held by “Several good men”.⁷⁷ One N.B. (believed to be economist Nicholas Barbon, an interlocutor of Gerard de Maylnes, the commissioner of foreign trade under both Elizabeth and James) grimly observed that when one considers “the Places where [precious metals] are dug”, “the smallness of their Veins” and “the Charges of getting them”, the metals that mining recovers “do not yield much more Profit than other Minerals, nor pay Miners better Wages for digging them”.⁷⁸

The very placement of a monument to mining in *Chruso-thriambos* is a daring decision on Munday’s part, and one that creates palpable moral confusion not only because the Orferie represents a divisive subject matter, but also because it directly associates that subject matter with Cheapside’s Goldsmiths, who had traditionally enjoyed the fruits of mining while remaining a

⁷⁶ Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, *Du Bartas his deuine weekes and works*, trans. Joshua Sylvester (London: Humfrey Lounes, 1611).

⁷⁷ Georgius Agricola, *De Re Metallica*, trans. President Herbert Hoover and Lou Henry Hoover (London: The Mining Magazine, 1912), 12.

⁷⁸ *A Discourse of Trade by N.B.* (London: Printed by Thomas Milbourn, 1690), sig. C3r.

comfortable distance away from the controversial process itself. Much like the way in which *mumia* was sold in carefully sanitised forms – ointments, powders, dried and shapeless strips – that dissociated the products from their unsavoury methods of acquisition, the precious metals reconstituted into coins and jewellery and purveyed by Goldsmiths in London depended, as Newman observes, “on invisible labor in faraway mines, first in Central Europe and then in New Spain”.⁷⁹ Not only does the Orferie make visible the otherwise invisible labour behind the Goldsmiths’ prosperity, but Munday’s stylised representation of the processes behind the Goldsmiths’ public face might also be interpreted in terms every bit as unwholesome as grave-robbing. At its most elementary level, the Orferie presents audiences with, as Robinson observes, a “brutal image of mining as despoiler of a personified mother earth”⁸⁰ – a literalised female figure whose “entrailes” are penetrated “in plentifull measure” (sig. Cv) by an army of plunderers. That mining is depicted in such a horrific manner is at odds with the buoyant language used to describe the enormous device in the rest of the Show’s text. Munday’s introduction extols the process of delving for gold and silver in “every Vaine, Sinnew, & Artery” of the earth (sig. A4v), while Leofstane praises the generosity of Mother Earth, whose “gracious Daughters, *Golde* and *Silver* ... bountifully hurle abroad their Mothers treasures” (sig. Cv). These upbeat descriptions of mining invoke the positive rhetoric of Agricola, who describes the metals as gifts from a benevolent Nature which desires that man “might cultivate it and draw out of its caverns metals and other mineral products”.⁸¹ The contrast between what the audience is told and what they can see thus creates the same kind of tension as Faringdon’s resurrection: just as

⁷⁹ Newman, “Goldsmith’s Ware”, 104.

⁸⁰ Robinson, “Mayoral Pageantry”, 147.

⁸¹ Agricola, *De Re Metallica*, 12.

the graveyard scene is staged in such a way that it seems unclear as to whether or not the walking, talking dead man represents a celebration or an abomination, the sinister undercurrent of mining-as-rape in the Orferie is similarly problematic. Representing one moral absolute in its language and another in its appearance, the Orferie – “a body whose meaning is in dispute”,⁸² – might easily be construed as a barely-concealed critique of the Goldsmiths’ methods.

We might, therefore, choose to read the arrival of a pair of dug-up dead mayors at the dramatised mining operation of the Orferie, as Munday drawing topical parallels between mining and grave-robbing. There are, however, clear problems with ascribing political motivations to Munday’s equivocal representation of mining in *Chruso-thriambos*. Not least among these is the fact that if the Orferie is indeed part of a moral commentary on the mining process, it is not a commentary that Munday felt was worth making in his Shows for the Company of Ironmongers, *Camp-bell* (1609)⁸³ and *Sidero-Thriambos* (1618). Neither of these Shows brings into question the morality of mining anywhere near as explicitly as *Chruso-thriambos* despite the fact that the Ironmongers accrue their resources by the same means as the Goldsmiths. As it pertains to the act of mining, the Ironmongers’ pageants are respectful, even flattering. *Camp-bell*, for instance, includes representations of iron mines on a large island, bathed in the “Sun-shine of this royal happyness” (sig. B2r), while characters in *Sidero-Thriambos* praise the “plenteous Myne” and the “nimble and dexterious” miners, the hammers of whom fall “in sweet Musicall voyces” (sig. Br). These pleasant descriptions of mining are at odds with the darker, symbolically problematic representation of the process in the Goldsmiths’

⁸² Ibid., 153.

⁸³ Anthony Munday, *Camp-bell, or the ironmongers faire field* (London: E. Alde, 1609).

pageant. Given the prevalence of arguments against mining, it is true that by mentioning mining at all in any of these pageants, Munday necessarily associates both of the companies in question with controversy, in the light of which an audience may choose to interpret the companies' activities either favourably or unfavourably. Only in *Chruso-thriambos*, however, are the audience directed towards that unfavourable conclusion by grotesque imagery that functions as a "critique of the Goldsmiths' methods".⁸⁴ The specificity of Munday's thinly-veiled criticism suggests that there is rather more to the association between the living dead mayors and the Orferie than their shared origins in the act of morally questionable unearthing processes.

Instead, if Munday's opinion on mining changes between his work for the Goldsmiths and the Ironmongers, we might infer that the uncomfortable questions he raises about mining in the presence of Pemberton and his long-dead predecessors has less to do with the mining process itself, and more to do with *what* exactly is being dug up. The parallel that Munday seeks to impart on his audience is, I suggest, one between the living dead mayors and gold itself. Like the pelican, gold occupied a special place in the early modern imagination – as indeed it does in Western culture today. Unlike the pelican, however, which was generally attached to flattering descriptions of civic duty, gold as both a resource and as a symbol occupies a position of moral complexity. The position of gold as a multivalent signifier in early modern England, one described by Karen Newman as "overdetermined in its meanings and functions",⁸⁵ finds expression in the famous monologue by Jonson's covetous rogue Volpone, who describes gold as:

⁸⁴ Robinson, "Mayoral Pageantry", 148.

⁸⁵ Newman, "'Goldsmith's ware'", 102. On gold in early modern drama, see William H. Sherman, "Gold is the strength, the sinewes of the world": Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and England's Golden Age", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 6 (1993), 85-102.

Dear saint,
Riches, the dumb god, that giv'st all men tongues:
That canst do naught, and yet mak'st men do all things;
Thou art virtue, fame,
Honour, and all things else!

(1.1.22-26)

To Volpone, at least, gold represents “everything, all things to all men”, as Newman puts it.⁸⁶ But his words carry a sinister edge: gold may stand for positive attributes such as “virtue, fame, / Honour”, but it also stands for ominously unspecified “all things else” – which, coming from a character as brazenly avaricious as Volpone, presumably includes vice, infamy, and dishonour. What, after all, is Jonson's play about if not the ignoble “things” that man might do for the love of gold?

Volpone is not alone in drawing attention to gold's capacity for eliciting both positive and negative aspects of those who would possess it. We often see in writings from the period, gold's allure depicted in terms inseparable from the dangers that it presents. Thomas Dekker's *Fortunatus* might laud gold as “heavens phisicke, lifes restorative”, but his plan to elevate himself above the “wretch” that “Has Gold, yet starves” relies upon the twofold understanding that not only can gold corrupt those who would possess it for its own sake, but also that the precious metal in and of itself is incapable of feeding a man.⁸⁷ Similarly, Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas insists that the natural inclination of man to possess gold comes at an impossible price: gold may “corrupt thy conscience”, he explains, and even the “Indian Griffin” that builds a nest of gold both “strong and steep” will come to fear “theevish hands” (sigs. Zzr, L3r).

⁸⁶ Newman, “Goldsmith's Ware”, 103.

⁸⁷ Thomas Dekker, *The pleasant comedie of old Fortunatus* (London: Printed by S. Stafford for William Aspley, 1600), sig. B3r.

As might be imagined, the Goldsmiths – primary beneficiaries of gold’s “phisicke” – were particularly associated with the less auspicious connotations that accompanied dealing in precious metals. As Robinson explains, “of all London’s trades, the Goldsmiths were most often picked out for comments over issues of usury, profiteering, and an overabundance of wealth”.⁸⁸ Unsurprisingly for a Show titled “The Triumphes of Gold”, *Chruso-thriambos* does not shy away from highlighting the immense wealth enjoyed by the Goldsmiths; the Orferie at the heart of the Show illuminates the political and moral tensions created by gold profiteering in a way that simultaneously flatters the Company and opens it up for criticism.

By tracing the lineage of gold through a line of skilled labourers, the Orferie certainly celebrates the prosperity that gold brings to the wider community, a gesture harmonious with the general precept of community spirit at the heart of the annual Shows. And yet, if civic salubriousness was at all a factor in Munday’s design when equipping the Orferie it does not appear to be the primary concern of the display. Instead, on two occasions in the text Munday reminds his audience that the Goldsmiths proudly paid for the entire procession themselves, “sparing no cost” (sig. A3r). Time, describing the symbolism of the Orferie to those in attendance, makes mention of the historical relationship between the Goldsmiths and the Fishmongers but is quick to dissuade any suggestion that the relationship extended towards sharing the cost of the grandiose Show:⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Robinson, “Mayoral Pageantry”, 139.

⁸⁹ Time lauds the relationship as one of “ancient loue and cordiall amity” (sig. C2r) but of course beyond the rhetoric of brotherhood the reality of inter-guild relations in general was often more complex. See James Knowles, “The Spectacle of the Realm: civic consciousness, rhetoric and ritual in early modern London”, in J. R. Mulryne, Margaret Shewring, eds., *Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 157-189, 180-181.

let no censure stray so far at large,
To thinke the reason of that unity
Makes Fish-Mongers support the Gold-Smithes charge,
And their expences shared equally:
No, ti's the Gold-Smiths sole Society.
(sig. C2r)

Time's words demonstrate in no uncertain terms that in its content and size the Orferie is an unabashed exercise in showing off, boasting not only of the Goldsmiths' trade, but also of the immense wealth the guild possessed through its association with gold. However, as Munday would have been aware – and as the large number of writings against the power of gold would attest – highlighting the wealth enjoyed by the goldsmiths also unavoidably gives his audience cause to question the ethical cost of that same wealth. Just as in the churchyard, where Munday calls into question his audience's attitudes towards the dead by presenting death's opposite, Faringdon's return to life, by celebrating the *benefits* of gold through the "adulation and gaudy display" of the Orferie,⁹⁰ Munday draws our attention to the *dangers* of gold. The Orferie thus brings into focus a moral dichotomy in which criticisms of gold are confronted head-on even as the means by which this confrontation is presented parades the connection between the Goldsmiths and the contentious trade in precious metals.

The contentious nature of a celebration of gold in Munday's London makes the Orferie a fitting reception point for the party of living and dead men arriving at Cheapside. Both, after all, are problematic in the same sense: the dramatic action at both the churchyard and Cheapside seems designed, at least in part, to encourage an audience to question the morality of digging up

⁹⁰ Leah Sinanoglou Marcus, "City Metal and Country Mettle: The Occasion of Ben Jonson's Golden Age Restored", in David Bergeron ed., *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 26-47, 28.

something that was buried. More importantly, the arrival of the procession at the Orferie establishes a prominent symbolic and dramatic connection for the first time in the course of the show between the types of power that the living dead and the monument signify and which comprise the two central themes of the Show, mayoralty and gold. Although the relationship between the two is not made explicit through dialogue between characters, as is that between mayoralty and the blood of pelicans in *Chrysanaleia*, Munday's extensive description of the components that make up the Orferie suggest that dynamic visual spectacle would have drawn a clear parallel between the passage of gold and the passage of the mayor's civic power. After gold and silver are dug up from the earth, Munday informs readers,

these precious Mettals descend to divers other dexterious
Artezans; as the *Mint*-Maister, his *Coyners*, and divers others,
who make them serve in publike passage for generall benefit,
both in Coyne, Plate, and Jewels, as occasion best
discovereth the just necessitie.

(sig. Cv)

As it passes from one among the "divers ... dexterious Artezans" to another for society's "generall benefit", the flow of gold mirrors that of the mayor's authority as represented by the figures of Leofstane, Faringdon and Pemberton.

Pemberton stands, after all, as the latest recipient of the Lord Mayor's power, which descended to him via Faringdon, and originated with the very first mayor, Leofstane. The three men together exhibit the progression of a civic power that is, like the pelican's blood and the Orferie's precious metals, transferred for the wider good, and pre-empts the direct comparison between the Lord Mayor and gold in the concluding speech of the show: "You are a Gold-Smith, Golden be / Your daily deedes of Charitie" (sig. C4r).

If the “generall benefit” of gold in the presentation of the Orferie becomes analogous with that of mayoralty, so too does gold’s potential for misuse correspond with that of mayoral power. Munday highlights this danger through the presence at the base of the Orferie of an “*Essay-Maister* or absolute *Tryer*” of “those pure refined bodies” gold and silver (sig. Cv). Testing for what Leofstane terms the “vertue” of metals, the *Essay-Maister* attributes a plainly moral quality to the proceedings, and one which addresses the potential for even the most “pure refined bodies” to be subjected to “base adulterating” (sig. Cv). Manifestly, Leofstane’s explanation refers simply to the testing of gold and silver in order to prevent the dishonest practice of cutting valuable metals with less valuable metals – a practice which is invoked, Leofstane assures his audience, only to demonstrate that London’s Goldsmiths are not party to it (the gold of the Orferie, evidently flawless, is “commended to Sovereigne *Justice*” (sig. Cv). Given the correspondence between gold and the mayor in Munday’s *Show*, however, there appears to be a latent significance to the notion of determining “true worth or value” pertaining to the types of corruption that Middleton’s *Time* warns the new mayor of two years later in *The Triumphes of Truth*: *Time* compares mayoral power to “so pure / A Cristall” that it will endure “no poyson of Oppression, Bribes, Hir’d Law, / But ‘twill appeare soone in some cracke or flaw” (sig. D2r). Munday’s insinuation of civic corruption through the allegorical device of the Orferie is perhaps not initially spelled out in terms as overt as Middleton’s, but the correlation between the potential corruptions of gold and mayoralty anticipates the final speech of *Chruso-thriambos* in which Faringdon hopes that Pemberton might be “Free from partiall bribes embraces” and will let “no rich or mighty man / Injure the poore” (sig. C4r).

Although Faringdon seemingly describes the moral hazards which might befall a civic leader in order to deny their effect on Pemberton, by doing so he nevertheless acknowledges that a Lord Mayor, like gold, might prove susceptible to corruption, and therefore Lord Mayors, like gold, might themselves be assayed in order to determine their “true worth or value” (sig. Cv). The gold-testing paradigm as presented by Munday is not, it must be noted, an exact model for the trial of mayoralty. Gold, after all, is necessarily tested *before* it can be “bountifully hurle[d] abroad” (sig. Cv). The “vertue” (sig. Cv) of the mayor, however, can only truly be gauged by the effect that he has in the public domain *after* his term has expired. Such things are, the Show implies, best judged retrospectively. Does a mayor inspire his people to, as Time puts it, “learne (by his cleare light) to shine”? Or do his “obscure and misty deedes” set a “harsh and hatefull president” (sig. C3v)? In these terms, Faringdon stands as one who has passed the test of mayoralty: “What plenty came / To greet his daies”, Time trumpets in the churchyard, “with former times did strive” (sig. B3v). Thus, the figure who arrives at the Orferie to witness the *Essay-Maister* testing the virtue of gold represents in himself such a triumph of virtue that he was called back from the dead to partake in Pemberton’s celebrations.

At Cheapside, however, the Orferie presents us with a counterpoint to Faringdon’s paragon of incorruptibility in the figure of a “greedy and never satisfied *Lydian* King, who desired, that whatsoever he toucht might turn to Golde” (sig. Br).⁹¹ The king in question demonstrates fittingly the “ill example” of civic leadership that Munday’s Time scorns (sig. C3v), and stands as something of a dark mirror to the idealised Faringdon, offering the audience an example of

⁹¹ Munday’s king presumably reflects the myth of King Midas, although Munday appears to have conflated the story of the avaricious Midas of Phrygia with that of legendarily wealthy Lydian monarch Creosus.

one who has evidently failed the test of virtue. The story of Midas as related by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* is, after all, first and foremost a morality tale that warns against selfishness and blind greed. Although Midas initially enjoys transforming items into gold, he soon realises the error of his avarice when he discovers that his ability extends to food and drink as well. Simultaneously “wretch and rich”,⁹² he is wealthy beyond measure but unable to satisfy his hunger or quench his thirst. Situated on an Orferie depicting the positive societal influences that gold has in terms of industry and employment, Midas simultaneously stands both for the destructive tendencies of gold, and for the corrective power of the same (sig. C).

Midas’ fate within the mythology of *Chruso-thriambos* – a fate that, Munday emphasises, is a direct consequence of his greed – is generally interpreted as a thinly-veiled topical commentary on King James’ strained relationship with the Goldsmiths around the time that the Show was written.⁹³ Not only was the monarch in great financial difficulty at the time,⁹⁴ but earlier that year he had made a point of attending the Goldsmiths’ Trial of the Pyx, the annual ceremony held to gauge the purity of the gold and silver used by the King’s Mint. Leah Sinanoglou Marcus suggests that James’ attendance, unprecedented for a monarch, served as a “strong hint” that the Goldsmiths “would do well to abandon certain aspects of their search for ‘private lucre’ and heed [James’] proclamation for the preservation of money.”⁹⁵ The proclamation in question – ‘A proclamation against melting or conveying out of the Kings Dominion of Gold or Silver’ – came into force some nine days following the ceremony, as Hill reminds us, and further increased political tension between he

⁹² Ovid, *Metamorphosis* XI, trans. Arthur Golding (London: William Seres, 1567), sig. T3r.

⁹³ See Hamilton, *Anthony Munday*, 159 and Marcus “City Metal”, 159; Hill, *Pageantry and power*, 297.

⁹⁴ Palmer puts the royal debt during this time at £720,000 (‘Metropolitan Resurrection’, 379).

⁹⁵ Marcus, “City Metal”, 29.

and the Goldsmiths.⁹⁶ To the observations of these critics I add that the eventual fate of Munday's Midas – transformed into the “Touch-Stone” with which the purity of gold is assayed (sig. Br) – lends itself well to the context of a political clash which amounted to control over not only the nation's wealth but, in Munday's terms, its “vertue” (sig. Cv). Midas' fate may be construed, for example, as a timely suggestion that the only king involved in the assaying of purity is one whose impurity, like that of the “*Lydian* King”, might be the driving force behind the process. Moreover, difficult though it is to ascertain specific instances of hyperbole in a dramatic device constructed around allegory and overt symbolism, one may nevertheless read in Munday's descriptions of the assaying of gold a purposefully exaggerated sense of care and diligence: the gold of the Orferie is tested not once but twice – first by the *Essay-Maister* and subsequently by no less than the personification of Gold herself – to ensure its “undeciveable perfection” (sig. Cv). Given the political context of the Show, then, Munday's invocation of the Midas tale seems a particularly audacious inclusion that, while not entirely germane to a celebration of civic responsibility, is certainly redolent of the turbulent relationship between the Goldsmiths and the king who questioned their methods.

To simply equate Midas with King James, however, is overly restrictive – even if, given that *Chruso-thriambos* was funded by and written for the Goldsmiths, this is in all likelihood the overall effect that Munday hoped to achieve. Even though by itself the image of a king catastrophically unable to control gold symbolically shifts notions of gold-related corruption and greed away from the Goldsmiths and towards James I, as an integrated part of the Orferie, Midas' significance is wider-reaching, and his presence on the device

⁹⁶ Hill, *Pageantry and power*, 297.

encourages comparison to the Lord Mayors who have arrived to view it. Midas' sins, after all, amount to a double crime against both gold and civic power, the two central themes of the Lord Mayor's Show emblematised by the flow of precious metals down the Orferie.

If Faringdon, risen from his tomb like gold from the earth, represents an idealised authority figure whose term as mayor proved him to be figuratively pure, Midas' afterlife indicates the threat to society posed by a corrupted leader. While Ovid's Midas repents and is eventually freed from his curse, the version of the tale that Munday relates in *Chruso-thriambos* makes a greater punitive example of the fallen ruler as if to emphasise the stark contrast between Faringdon and Midas: Munday's "*Lydian King*" finds "his own covetousnesse to be his ruine", and is "Metamorphozed into a Stone" as punishment (sig.Br). As a statue, Munday's king serves a functional as well as a symbolic purpose; in an ironic twist, his transfigured body, so "immeasurably affected to Golde" (sig. Br) becomes the "Touch-Stone and Trier of both Golde and Silver, to warne other Worldlings of the like avaritious folly" (sig. Br). His punishment thus neatly marries in a single striking image the notions of morality and power – both the economic power of gold and the political power of civic authority – at the heart of the Show. Midas' punishment for failing the test of civic virtue is forever to be the benchmark against which corruption, be it of gold or "folly", is measured. A literalised monument to his own legacy of avarice, Midas serves as a warning to the living in a manner akin to the ill-fated revenants of medieval Christianity, and thus proves the antithesis of Faringdon. While Faringdon's living death is presented in such a way as to inspire virtue in a leader, Midas' is designed to discourage sin and corruption in the new Lord Mayor.

Chruso-thriambos both begins and ends with a speech from a dead former Lord Mayor of London, a fact that suggests a great deal about what a powerful presence living death has in the both the explicit dramatic action and the implicit symbolism of the Show. Although, as Tracey Hill observes, “there will always be elements of the festivities that print cannot capture”, Hill reminds us that the language of the printed text, as I have explained, is rich with references to and implications that arise from the interactions between the dead and the living.⁹⁷ Over the course of the Show’s dramatic action living death signifies topical discourses such as those surrounding the ethical quandaries of mining and gold, and also provides examples from both history (Leofstane and Faringdon) and mythology (Midas) from which the living might learn. The most significant function that living death serves in the Show, however, is in facilitating a parallel between the procession of mayors and the Orferie. By examining the vast gold foundry through the lens of living death, we might construe that the flow of gold between skilled artisans and the flow of mayoral authority from one elected figure to another represent the same transfer of power. The correlation between the Lord Mayor’s power in this Show and the mandate of the “King’s Two Bodies” should not be understated; *Chruso-thriambos* is at its most elementary a testament to the importance of the Lord Mayor to the people of the city. Munday may have penned the Show *for* the Goldsmiths, but he also wrote as a concerned and politically-conscious citizen. It is not out of sheer love for his employers, I suggest, that Munday represents the new mayor as having an

⁹⁷ Tracey Hill, *Pageantry and power*, 214.

“Absolute power” (sig. A4r) as “the Head” to the city,⁹⁸ and nor is it in the spirit of flattery that he uses Midas to demonstrate the fate that awaits those who misuse that absolute power. The Lord Mayor, Time reminds us, is elected by the “free leave” of citizens based on “whom best they should respect” (sig. B3v), and as such his power is comparable to that of the monarch himself: “Let it be said, for this high favour done”, Time proclaims, “King *James* hath found, a just *James Pemberton*” (sig. C3v).

In short, the juxtaposition of the new Lord Mayor James Pemberton with the revenant forms of his historical predecessors presents in emblematic fashion the passage of the Lord Mayor’s power, forging links between the past and the present, the dead and the living. Furthermore, by establishing a direct link between civic authority and the assaying of gold, Munday draws his audience’s attention – and specifically that of Pemberton – to the fact that a mayor’s virtue must be re-established with each new incarnation. As the pageant-writer, Munday is at liberty to manipulate life and death as he sees fit to direct that process of re-establishment, and encourage Pemberton to pass the test of purity.

⁹⁸ The phrase was not Munday’s alone: Hamilton notes that the attribution to the city of an “absolute power” recurs in City documents. See Hamilton, *Anthony Munday*, 159.

"There's an end": Conclusion

It is July 2011, and I am part of the audience in attendance at a showing of the RSC's latest Macbeth, directed by Michael Boyd at the newly-built Royal Shakespeare Theatre. About to begin is the scene in which Macbeth and Banquo traditionally become acquainted with the three "weyrd sisters" (1.3.33). The performance thus far has been entirely without supernatural occurrence; Boyd, like several other directors of stage and screen before him, omitted Shakespeare's famous, if narratively superfluous, opening scene in which the witches are traditionally introduced.¹ The result of Boyd's omission is twofold. On the one hand Boyd confutes our preconceptions of a play famous for its supernatural qualities by directing our initial focus onto the human landscape of Shakespeare's tragedy, re-defining Macbeth as a "political and sectarian masterpiece as much as a human catastrophe".² On the other hand, for those in the audience who, like me, are familiar with the events of Macbeth, the witches are conspicuous by their absence. Common sense, after all, tells me that the witches must appear in some shape or form before long; given their vital role in Shakespeare's 1.3, a scene which forms the narrative keystone of the tragedy, it is impossible to imagine how any version of Macbeth could omit them entirely. And yet there is no mention of witches or the supernatural in the show programme. Could it simply be that Boyd has in store for his audience a new interpretation of Shakespeare's "secret, black and midnight hags" (4.1.47)? Or could it be instead that Boyd has done the unimaginable in staging a Macbeth without the supernatural agents that Mary Griffin rightly considers "three of

¹ For example, Richard Goold's theatrical production starring Patrick Stewart (2006) took place in a hospital and replaced the witches with walking, talking cadavers who performed both in body bags and beneath sheets.

² Michael Coveney, 'Macbeth, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon', *The Independent*, Thursday, 28 April 2011.

Shakespeare's most memorable characters"?³ There is buzz of anticipation in the theatre as the lights drop and the scene changes.

The set is suitably barren and godless: a sparsely-lit desecrated chapel in the style of the early Protestant war against religious iconography. A pile of rubble upstage is all that remains of various vandalised and defaced statues, paintings and murals, while smashed stained glass windows loom upstage. Through one of these windows enters Jonathan Slinger's battle-scarred and fresh-bleeding Macbeth. The witches are still nowhere to be seen. As Slinger utters his first line, however, he is interrupted by something being lowered to the stage from the darkness above. The eyes of the audience follow Slinger's gaze, and around me members of the audience gasp audibly at the sight that meets them: three small children – two boys and one girl – are suspended from the rafters, dangling from what appear to be meat hooks. Their heads droop; their faces are pale; their lips are a sickening shade of blue. Aghast, Macbeth cries out to the lifeless bodies. At once, the children jerk and twitch like cadaverous puppets on strings. As their feet touch the floor the dead children address the Thane in one voice: "All hail, Macbeth".

*

Boyd's *enfants terribles*, it transpires, are not witches – they are ghosts. And these ghosts serve to turn death – and specifically the inter-relations between the dead and the living – into a central aesthetic of the performance, in a way that cackling hags could not. Because Boyd's *Macbeth* centres its action around

³ Mary Griffin, 'Review: *Macbeth* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre', *Coventry Telegraph*, 27 Apr. 2011.

the engagement between the worlds of the living and the dead, it lends itself rather well towards a conclusion to this thesis on living death.

By presenting ghosts who vanish “into the air” (1.3.83) instead of witches, Boyd’s *Macbeth* taps into a long dramatic tradition of dramatic ghosts which seem to exist on the very boundaries of the living world, both detached from and yet somehow attached to life even in death. Ghosts which are unable to fully interact with or integrate themselves into the world, ghosts who appear unsolicited and vanish just as suddenly into what Banquo would term the “bubbles” of the earth (1.3.81). More important than the ghosts’ manner of disappearance, however, is their timing: just as Shakespeare’s witches leave the scene when Macbeth attempts to interrogate them, Boyd’s ghostly children do the same, flying about the stage before exiting on Macbeth’s final command, voiced by Slinger as a desperate plea, “Speak, I charge you” (1.3.80). In this context, it is not simply supernatural knowledge which the children deny Slinger’s *Macbeth*, it is knowledge from beyond the grave.

In the mouths of dead children, the witches’ bold predictions, stripped by Boyd of any of Shakespeare’s references to black magic, take on a new significance which would have been very familiar to an early modern audience. Ghosts in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries are not known for their conversational prowess. The riddle-like claims that the ghostly children make to Banquo and Macbeth thus have much in common with the words of many ghosts in early modern drama who tease their percipients with knowledge from the afterlife but leave before such knowledge can be satisfactorily imparted. Consider Old Hamlet, who can speak only briefly with his confused, astonished son before fading away “at the crowing of the cock” (1.1.150), or

Brutus, whose perplexing conversation with the ghost of Caesar leaves him unsatisfied: “Ill spirit, I would hold more talk with thee” (4.2.379).

These “weird children”, as they are referred to by Steve Toussaint’s Banquo, are undoubtedly supernatural creatures but in their presentation they signify not magic or necromancy, they stand for living death. Following their first harrowing appearance, they materialise unheeded at various points throughout the rest of the play, becoming objective correlatives to death in Boyd’s production, and as the death toll increases so too do the appearances of these ghosts. As Macbeth murders Duncan offstage, the “owl scream” that Lady Macbeth hears is actually the scream of the dead girl. In the fifth act the three children fly about the stage to represent Malcolm’s invading army, and the final scene culminates with them circling the dying Macbeth. Slinger’s Macbeth seems to be aware of their presence, and dies as the consequences of his murderous actions very literally close in on him. The ghostly children in Boyd’s production come to stand for the omnipresence of death in *Macbeth*, and the morbid atmosphere they carry with them ultimately spreads – the ghosts of Duncan, Banquo, Young Siward and Lady Macduff join their ranks – until, at the very end of the play, the stage is populated by more dead characters than living.

This is where my thesis ends, and where future studies of living death must pick up from. Nowhere is living death a more powerful aesthetic force than in the theatre, and now that it has been established how crucial an understanding of living death can be to our understanding of early modern theatre, the time is ripe to begin to explore how an understanding of all of the various permutations of living death which I have identified – and many more which I have not – can be granted new significance through modern

performative interpretations of early modern drama. Many critics already read the theatrical *ghost* as a primarily psychological construct. Marvin Carlson's psychoanalytical reading of the theatre suggests that "the present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences"⁴. He understands ghosts in performance as products of a wider cultural memory which inhabits and subverts any single performance. More recently, Alice Rayner in *Ghosts: Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theatre* (2006), discusses the ghost as the ephemeral substance of a theatre which "insists on the reality of ghosts".⁵ To Zimmerman, similarly, the ghost represents all that is visible and invisible about performance – and, while commonly performed, can never truly be captured.⁶

The most pertinent question which these works leave unanswered, however, is this: if theatre cannot fully represent the corpse, what *does* it represent instead? This question, I believe, is not unrelated to a similar gap in Michel de Montaigne's logic in his essay "To philosophise is to learn how to die" (1580). To Montaigne, death is the condition of one's creation:

Your life's continual task is to build your death. You are *in* death while you are *in* life: when you are no more *in* life, you are after death.⁷

To Montaigne, death *per se* is both the moment of a lifetime – life's perpetual function – and also the very *final* moment of a lifetime: the single instance or breaking point at which the quick become the dead. What remains unclear,

⁴ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as a Memory Machine* (Detroit: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 2.

⁵ Alice Rayner, *Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theatre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 10.

⁶ Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1991), 103.

however, is how he designates the final outcome of this life's "work" that is the dead body. If a body is neither "in life", nor dying, nor "in death", what is it? I suggest that the answer to this question, at least as far as Renaissance drama is concerned, is simply 'performing'. If, as Zimmerman argues, theatre cannot present inanimate corpses,⁸ this thesis explores the extent to which Renaissance drama intends to re-present animate ones.

Stage directions and marginal notes in extant early modern dramatic manuscripts are notoriously scarce, and so it is difficult to speak with any certainty of the dramatic techniques used in the Shakespearean theatre, as David Bevington recently discussed.⁹ There are, however, ways that, while lacking conclusive historical authority, can nonetheless circumvent the problems caused by a lack of primary evidence in this area and assist in our understanding of what occurred on the Renaissance stage. Stanley Wells, for instance, has compiled a list of resources and technologies which itineraries have revealed were available to early modern practitioners, and were certainly used on occasion to represent ghosts,¹⁰ while Bevington uses performance records from the Restoration onwards to illuminate the ways in which some of Shakespeare's best-known works may have been performed. I suggest that not only might modern performances based around notions of living death provide us with valuable insight into early modern dramaturgy of living death, but building performance around how plays might represent or signify living death can help to provide new and exciting dramas in response to Wells'

⁸ Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse*, 106.

⁹ David Bevington, *This Wide and Universal Theater: Shakespeare in Performance, Then and Now* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Stanley Wells, "Staging Shakespeare's Ghosts", in *The Arts of Performance in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama: Essays for G.K. Hunter*, ed. Eugene M. Waith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 50-70.

demand for fresh research into the theatrical manifestations of ghosts in Shakespeare's time.¹¹

Viewing Renaissance drama through the lens of the “living dead” has wide ramifications for our understanding of early modern theatre, and will enable modern practitioners to develop exciting new readings of “living dead” characters which answer Wells’ call for representations of living dead characters which present “a differentiation ... from the norm”.¹² And if a break from the norm is the best that happens, perhaps that will be enough. Dead children instead of witches? It’s life, Jim, but not as we know it.

¹¹ Wells, “Staging Shakespeare's Ghosts”, 50.

¹² Ibid., 51.

Appendices

Fig. 1 – Queen Elizabeth I flanked by Time (left) and Death (right), c. 1610, artist unknown.

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Fig. 2 – John Donne, in his shroud, c. Artist unknown, turned into an effigy by Nicholas Stone in 1631.

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